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**BRITISH DOMINIONS WOMAN SUFFRAGE  
UNION.**

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**REPORT**

OF THE

Second (Biennial) Conference,

LONDON, 1916.

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# **REPORT**

OF THE

**SECOND (BIENNIAL) CONFERENCE**

HELD ON

**July 5th, 6th, and 7th, 1916,**

IN THE

**CENTRAL HALL, WESTMINSTER,**

**LONDON.**

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## PREFACE.

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**I**N presenting this Report to the Women's Organisations Overseas, the Editors wish to express their keen sense of the shortcomings, but at the same time their intense conviction of the importance of the work done. The difficulties in the way of holding the Conference were very great, not the least being the uncertainty to the very last day, of the character and amount of support from Overseas. Warm thanks are due to the English speakers who, months beforehand, promised not only to give addresses on the subjects which they have made specially their own, but to speak so as to supplement, if necessary, the contributions from Overseas.

The Conference has been educative to a remarkable degree. For the first time delegates from the Women's Organisations Overseas have met on the same platform with the leaders of the Women's Cause in the Motherland. The meetings have revealed more clearly than ever what we should gain if we knew more of each other's work, and how great would be our power if we could demand with one voice the reforms for which we all are working, and on which we all are agreed. Reports in the Press and comments by the outside world have shown with what interest and attention the movement for greater union among women is being followed. The Conference has demonstrated that the astonishing unanimity of feeling of the men and women of the Dominions Overseas is not confined to the needs of the present lamentable struggle only, but that women as well as men, even in the midst of overwhelming sorrow, have their eyes fixed on the future, and are preparing themselves for the work of reconstruction. More than that, the Conference has greatly intensified the feeling of solidarity among women, and deepened the conviction that we may not leave any longer for solution by one sex only, problems such as those which were discussed. We see more clearly than before that it is the bounden duty of women to take a leading part in the solution of all problems that affect the welfare of the race. The conception of the sovereign position of the mother, the guardian and priestess of the race, exists in a state of dim consciousness in the mind of every human being. We have now come to a crisis in world-history, when this idea must be brought out into the clear light of reason, and made an active, guiding principle in legislation and administration. In all humility we believe that by the recognition and acceptance of our responsibility as women we shall serve not only the highest interests of the Empire, but the greater cause of humanity.

We therefore appeal to all Women's Organisations Overseas, founded for political or social reform, to make this report known as

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widely as possible. We invite every such organisation to join the union. The greater the variety in point of view, the wider our common outlook, and the more helpful the discussion of our common problems. We beg that all will begin at once, to work with us in preparation for the third Conference in 1918. It is quite possible that in 1918 we may have to change our name, for the initial victory of enfranchisement may have been gained, and we may all be free to enter the vast field of work, the gate of which is unlocked by the vote.

As regards finance, the auditor's statement shows a small balance to our credit. But the cost of printing and posting this report has yet to be met. The expenses of the Union are still limited to those of stationery, printing and postage. But the work is growing very rapidly in importance, and presently an office and paid help will be imperative. The subscription list shows that the work has been done so far through the contributions of comparatively few, Overseas and in London. We know that these have felt it a privilege thus to serve the cause, but we know too, that every affiliated society and every associated member recognises that expenses should be met by contributions, according to means, from everyone.

HARRIET C. NEWCOMB, *Hon. Sec.*

MARGARET HODGE, *Hon. Press Sec.*

DOROTHY PETHICK, *Hon. Treas.*

} *Joint*  
} *Editors.*

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# B.D.W.S.U. CONFERENCE.

July 5th—7th, 1916.

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## *LIST OF DELEGATES APPOINTED.*

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### NEW ZEALAND—

Women's Christian Temperance Union of New Zealand.  
Miss Isitt, Miss Newcomb.

Canterbury Women's Institute.  
Mrs. Bracher, Miss Rutter, Miss Lloyd.

Women's Political Association of Auckland.  
Mrs. Hitchcock.

### AUSTRALIA—

Women's Liberal Association of New South Wales.  
Mrs. Sydney Herring, Mrs. N. N. Thomson.

Women's Progressive Association of New South Wales.  
Miss E. L. C. Watson.

Women's Political Association of Victoria.  
Miss Muriel Matters.

Women's Non-Party Political Association of South Australia.  
Mrs. Wragge, Miss L. B. Hornabrook.

Women's Service Guild of Western Australia.  
Mrs. Keith Adam, Mrs. Griffiths Foulkes.

### CANADA—

National Equal Franchise Union.  
Mrs. Constance L. A. Lloyd.

Women's Political Educational League of Manitoba.  
Mrs. Twilley.

### SOUTH AFRICA—

Women's Enfranchisement Association of the Union of South Africa.

Mrs. Hull (Pretoria), to represent the president of the W.E.A.U.

Mrs. Beamish Lane (Natal), late Secretary, W.E.A.U.

Mrs. Bigger.

Mrs. Newton (Pretoria).

Mrs. White-Cooper (Cradock, C.P.).

Miss Britten (Oudtshoorn).

Mrs. W. G. Brown (Durban).

Mrs. Donaldson (Women's Reform Club of Johannesburg).

Lady Phillips (Johannesburg).

Mrs. Roseveare (Maritzburg).

Mrs. Russ Barker.

## BUSINESS MEETING.

July 5th, 1916. 10 a.m.—11.30 a.m.

*Present*: The Executive Committee, and the following Delegates and Representatives:—

NEW ZEALAND.—Mrs. Bracher, Mrs. Hitchcock, Miss Margaret L. Lloyd, Miss Rutter.

AUSTRALIA.—N.S.W.: Mrs. Herring, Miss C. M. Sharland.

Victoria: Mrs. Pickett, Mrs. W. J. Turner.

S. Australia: Miss L. B. Hornabrook.

W. Australia: Mrs. Griffiths Foulkes.

Queensland: Mrs. Crowle.

CANADA.—Mrs. Agar Adamson, Mrs. Constance L. A. Lloyd.

SOUTH AFRICA.—Miss L. M. Britten, Mrs. W. G. Brown, Miss Brenda Fairbridge, Mrs. Beamish Lane, Mrs. Newton.

CHAIR: MISS QUINLAN (Australia),  
in the absence of Mrs. Leathes (Canada).

The minutes of the business meeting of the first Conference, July 9th, 1914, were read and signed.

The Hon. Sec. then read the following statement:—

Owing to the outbreak of war the publication of a Report of the first Conference was postponed till a time when attention to it might more reasonably be expected. The opportunity occurred a year after, when through the kind co-operation of Mrs. Cecil Chapman, President, New Constitutional Society for Women's Suffrage, a public meeting was held, on July 6th, 1915, at Knightsbridge, London, in acknowledgment of the gifts which had been received from Overseas for sufferers through the war. A Report of the war relief work in distribution of these gifts, read at this meeting was printed and sent, together with a report of the first Conference and a summary of the work of the Union during the year, July, 1914-1915, to all friends in every part of the Empire.\*

From December, 1915, to May, 1916, the Executive and Advisory Committees met monthly, the chief work being preparation for the second Conference, July, 1916.

At the first meeting of these joint Committees a request was sent to the women of Australia and New Zealand urging them as enfranchised women to press upon their respective Premiers the duty of publicly supporting the principle of Woman Suffrage during their coming official visits to Britain. A full account of the vigorous action of the Australian and New Zealand women in response to this request appeared in the English Suffrage papers. It afforded a remarkable proof of the solidarity of the women of these Dominions and those of the Motherland. The members of the Committee desire to record their warm thanks to their sisters Overseas for this help. The Hon. Sec. B.D.W.S.U., in co-operation with the secretaries of the chief Suffrage Societies in Great Britain, repeatedly communicated with Mr. Hughes, Premier of Australia, during his stay in London, but without result. Mr. Hughes declined to take the chair or to speak at any meeting. Mr. Massey, Premier of New Zealand, had not yet arrived in London (July 5th).

During the year, July, 1915-1916, the work of increasing the circulation of all Suffrage papers and of women's papers devoted to

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\* Copies (price 1d. each) of both of these reports can be had on application to the Hon. Sec.



social and political reform has gone forward. The Hon. Press Secretary has written many articles for the British Suffrage papers on women's work Overseas, and for the general Press Overseas on the activities of the B.D.W.S.U.

Many orders for books on the Woman's Movement have been received and executed. The Hon. Sec. for Literature hopes further to develop this very important part of our work.

In connection with the Day of Prayer of Women Overseas for Enlightenment in the present World-crisis, a service was held on December 31st in the Royal Chapel of the Savoy, London, by the chaplain, the Rev. Hugh B. Chapman, and Mass was said in St. James's Church, Spanish Place, by kind permission of his Lordship, Bishop Butt.

### REVISION OF WORKING ORDER.

In view of the difficulties due to the continuance of the war, the Executive Committee asked the delegates and representatives assembled to confirm the constitution of the Union (July 9th, 1914) for another two years. This constitution is worded as follows (see p. 2 of First Report):—

“OBJECTS.—To secure for the women in the British Dominions the same political rights as are enjoyed by the men, and to arouse women to a fuller sense of their duties and responsibilities as citizens.

AFFILIATION.—Any regularly constituted Women's Social or Political association in the enfranchised Dominions, and any regularly constituted Woman Suffrage association in the un-enfranchised Dominions is eligible for affiliation.

Any person in sympathy with the objects of the Union may become an Hon. Associate Member.

To avoid initial difficulties it was agreed that the Union should be limited for the present to the Self-Governing Dominions.

AFFILIATION and MEMBERSHIP FEES were provisionally fixed as follows, the financial year to end July 31st:—  
Societies numbering not more than 50 members,

Maximum for any Society	...	4s., or 1 dollar per annum.
Hon. Associate Members	...	£2, or 10 dollars per annum.
		1s., or 25 cents per annum.

The work of consolidation was entrusted to the care of a small Representative Committee in London. A report on the work done will be submitted to a second Conference to be held in London in 1916.”

The request for the confirmation of this constitution for two years was granted unanimously, with a kind tribute from the chair to the value of the work done by the Hon. Sec. The Executive Committee were re-elected, with power to add to their number.

In consequence of the decision to confirm the constitution, the application for affiliation of the Mussoorie Suffrage Society, U.P. India, was postponed till the third Conference in 1918. Meanwhile a representative of this society will be asked to join the Advisory Committee, and every effort will be made not only to come into closer connection with India, but with women's societies in every other part of the Empire.

The Advisory and Executive Committees desire to record their deep sense of loss in the death of Mrs. Macintosh, one of the founders of the B.D.W.S.U., and President of the W.E.A.U. of S. Africa.

A vote of thanks, proposed by the Hon. Sec., was passed unanimously to the members of the Advisory Committee who, in the midst of their own arduous work, have given so much time and thought to preparation for the Conference.

HARRIET C. NEWCOMB, Hon. Sec.

# REPORT OF WAR RELIEF WORK.

## August, 1915 to July, 1916.

Since last August we have received:—

- 114 Bales from the Sydney Babies' Kits Society, Australia,
- 39 Sacks from Queensland Babies' Kits Society, Australia;
- 2 Cases from Invercargill, New Zealand,
- 5 Cases from Lady Stout, Wellington, New Zealand.
- 1 Case from Otago, New Zealand,
- 9 Cases from South Africa,

as well as some we have been unable to identify. Ten cases from Tasmania went astray, but some have been found at the office of the Belgian Canal Boat Fund.

The clothing thus sent has been distributed, in part to our own people through the Infant Welfare Centres, Schools for Mothers, Soldiers and Sailors' Families' Association, Workers' Suffrage Federation (Miss Sylvia Pankhurst) at Bow, Women and Children's Hospitals, East End Mothers' Lying-in Home, whose 700 babies born in 1915-1916 we have helped to clothe, etc. We have also sent to Scotland, Ireland, and Wales, besides relieving innumerable private cases.

By far the larger quantity, however, has been sent to our Allies.

To Belgium.—Furnes and Château des Vieux, through the Canal Boat Fund,

King Albert Civilian Hospital Fund at La Panne.

Interned Belgian Soldiers' Families in Holland.

National Committee of Relief in Belgium.

Society of Friends' War Victims Committee.

French Red Cross.

French Relief Fund.

Vestiaire Marie-José, through Dr. and Mrs. Haden Guest.

We have only been able to send a limited number of things to Russia for the relief of Polish refugees, much to our regret, owing to the enormous difficulties and expense of transport.

We have been more fortunate with Serbia. Through the kind offices of the Serbian Relief Fund, who have organised refugee colonies in Corsica and Southern France, we have been able to send several bales of beautiful babies' kits, principally for the officers' wives, who now dress their babies in the English fashion instead of in swaddling clothes.

A considerable sum of the money sent for relief has been expended on milk for babies and education and care of young children.

We have received many letters of gratitude, far in excess of anything our efforts deserve. Thanks are due to the Women's Emergency Corps for lending us a room in which to work.

At the time of writing this report we have received news of the sending of another 40 bales from the Babies' Kit Society, Sydney.

F. USSHER, Hon. Supt. of War Relief.

L. HORNABROOK.

E. QUINLAN.

J. WOOD.

G. ELWELL.

H. C. NEWCOMB, Hon. Secretary, B.D.W.S.U.

## EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE.

July, 1914—July, 1916.

MISS HARRIET C. NEWCOMB, Hon. Secretary.  
 MISS DOROTHY PETHICK, Hon. Treasurer.  
 MISS MARGARET HODGE, Hon. Press Secretary.  
 MISS DAISY D. SOLOMON, Hon. Sec. for Literature (1915).  
 MRS. USSHER, Hon. Supt.,  
 MISS L. B. HORNABROOK, } War Relief Work.  
 MISS QUINLAN, }

Address of Hon. Sec., c/o International Women's Franchise Club,  
 9, Grafton Street, Piccadilly, London, W.

## ADVISORY COMMITTEE, December, 1915—July, 1916.

Mrs. Pethick Lawrence (Chair),  
 Mrs. Fawcett,  
 Mrs. Despard,  
 Mrs. Cecil Chapman,  
 Miss Sylvia Pankhurst,  
 Mrs. Arncliffe-Sennett,  
 Miss C. E. Marshall,  
 Miss W. Holiday.

### THE EDITORS OF

"Jus Suffragii,"  
 "Common Cause,"  
 "Votes for Women,"  
 "The Vote,"  
 "Woman's Dreadnought,"  
 "Church League Monthly,"  
 "The Coming Day,"  
 "Catholic Suffragist,"  
 "Conservatist and Unionist  
 Women's Franchise Review,"  
 "News Sheet of the Suffragettes  
 of the "W.S.P.U."

### AUSTRALIA.

Mrs. Keith Adam,  
 Mrs. Meeson Coates,  
 Mrs. Muirhead Collins,  
 Miss Miles Franklin,  
 Mrs. Morrison,  
 Miss Morrison,  
 Miss Muriel Matters,  
 Mrs. W. J. Turner.

### NEW ZEALAND.

Mrs. Bracher,  
 Mrs. Hitchcock,  
 Lady Mackenzie,  
 Mrs. Pember Reeves,  
 Miss E. L. C. Watson,  
 Miss Nannie Young.

### SOUTH AFRICA.

Mrs. Auerbach,  
 Miss L. M. Britten,  
 Mrs. Hull,  
 Mrs. Graham,  
 Mrs. Lewis,  
 Mrs. Long,  
 Mrs. Morris,  
 Mrs. Newton,  
 Mrs. Schreiner,  
 Mrs. Saul Solomon.

### CANADA.

Mrs. Leathes,  
 Mrs. Constance L. A. Lloyd.

### LONDON.

Mrs. Henderson,  
 Mrs. Montefiore,  
 Mrs. J. S. Turner.

## LIST OF AFFILIATED SOCIETIES.

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### NEW ZEALAND—

The Women's Christian Temperance Union of the Dominion.

### AUSTRALIA—

The Women's Political Association of Victoria.

The Women's Non-Party Political Association of South Australia.

The Women's Service Guild of Western Australia.

The Women's Progressive Association of New South Wales.

### SOUTH AFRICA—

The Women's Enfranchisement Association of the Union of South Africa.

The Women's Enfranchisement League of Cape Province.

### CANADA—

The National Equal Franchise Union.

The Canadian Suffrage Association.

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The following have sent contributions towards the work of the Union, but are not yet regularly affiliated:—

### NEW ZEALAND—

The Women's Political League, Auckland.

The Women's Social and Political League, Wellington.

The Housewives' Union, Wellington.

The W.C.T.U., Wellington Central.

The W.C.T.U., Wellington District.

The Fabian Society, Christchurch.

The Canterbury Women's Institute.

### CANADA—

The West Algoma (Ontario) Equal Suffrage Association.

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No. of Hon. Associate Members, 66.

## British Dominions Woman Suffrage Union.

## SUBSCRIPTION LIST.

July 31st, 1914—July 31st, 1916.

*(An asterisk indicates special contributions towards the expenses of the Conference.)*

## NEW ZEALAND.

						£	s.	d.
1914-1915.								
Mr. and Mrs. Ensom	...	...	...	...	...	1	0	0
1915-1916.								
Mrs. McMillan	...	...	...	...	...	0	10	0
Miss Jessie Mackay	...	...	...	...	...	0	1	0
Miss Georgina Mackay	...	...	...	...	...	0	1	0
Miss S. J. Reithmuller	...	...	...	...	...	0	1	0
Mrs. Blundell	...	...	...	...	...	0	5	0
Miss McCarthy	...	...	...	...	...	0	1	0
W.C.T.U. of New Zealand:								
Affiliation fee, £2; subscription to Conference, 10s.						2	10	0
*Mrs. McMillan	...	...	...	...	...	1	0	0
*Lady Stout	...	...	...	...	...	5	0	0

## AUSTRALIA.

1915-1916.

Miss L. B. Hornabrook	...	...	...	...	...	0	10	0
Mrs. Walpole	...	...	...	...	...	6	4	0
Mr. Dowell O'Reilly	...	...	...	...	...	0	10	0
Mrs. Ussher	...	...	...	...	...	0	1	0
Women's Non-Party Political Association of South								
Australia, affiliation fee						0	12	0
Miss Banks	...	...	...	...	...	0	4	0
Mrs. A. Lister Watson	...	...	...	...	...	1	0	0
Mrs. Muirhead Collins	...	...	...	...	...	0	10	0
*Per Miss Whitham (Sec.), W.N-P.P.A.						1	0	0
Miss Miles Franklin	...	...	...	...	...	0	2	6
*Miss L. B. Hornabrook	...	...	...	...	...	2	0	0
*Mrs. Leo Myers	...	...	...	...	...	0	10	0
Mrs. Leo Myers' membership fee						0	1	0
Women's Service Guild of West Australia, affiliation								
fee						1	1	0
*Mrs. Keith Adam	...	...	...	...	...	0	3	0
Miss Nora Herring	...	...	...	...	...	0	5	0
Miss Amy L. Tomkinson	...	...	...	...	...	0	5	0
*Mrs. MacLaurin	...	...	...	...	...	0	10	0
*Mrs. Crowle	...	...	...	...	...	0	10	0
*Miss Annie Golding	...	...	...	...	...	1	1	0
*Mrs. Griffiths Foulkes	...	...	...	...	...	1	1	0
*Miss B. Perratt-Hill	...	...	...	...	...	0	2	6

**CANADA.**

1914-1915.	£	s.	d.
National Union of Women Suffrage Societies (now N.E.F.U.), affiliation fee (1st instalment) ...	1	0	0
1915-1916.			
Mrs. Gertrude Richardson ...	0	1	0
*Mrs. Twilley ...	0	5	0

**SOUTH AFRICA.**

1914-1915.			
Miss R. S. Kennedy ...	0	1	0
W.E.A.U., per Mrs. Thomson, affiliation fee ...	2	0	0
1915-1916.			
Miss Brenda Fairbridge ...	0	1	0
Mrs. Goulé and Mrs. Bell ...	0	3	0
Mrs. J. F. Solly ...	0	5	0
W.E.L. of Cape Province, affiliation fee ...	1	1	0
*W.E.L. of Cape Province ...	1	1	0
*Executive Committee of W.E.L. of C.P. ...	1	1	0
*Mrs. Blenkinsop ...	0	10	0
*Mrs. E. L. White ...	2	0	0
*Miss D. D. Solomon ...	0	3	0
*Mrs. Saul Solomon ...	0	10	6
Lady Steel (annual subscription) ...	1	1	0
*Per Mrs. Solly ...	0	2	6
*Per Mrs. Solly ...	0	5	0
*Mrs. Morice ...	0	5	0
Miss Hilda Fairbridge ...	0	1	0
*Per Mrs. Thomson, W.E.A.U.:			
W.E.L., Port Elizabeth, C.P. ...	1	1	0
W.E.L., Greytown, Natal ...	0	10	0
W.E.L., Uitenhage, C.P. ...	0	10	6
W.E.L., Krugersdorp, Transvaal ...	2	2	0
Miss Dorman, Port Elizabeth ...	1	1	0
	5	4	6

**GENERAL.**

1914-1915.			
Miss H. C. Newcomb ...	1	7	3
Miss M. Hodge ...	0	4	2
Mrs. Keith Adam ...	0	2	6
Mrs. Crowle ...	0	2	6
Mrs. D. Morris-Cohen ...	0	10	0
1915-1916.			
Miss H. C. Newcomb ...	1	1	0
Mrs. Pethick Lawrence ...	0	1	0
Miss H. C. Newcomb ...	5	0	0
Per Rev. Hugh B. Chapman ...	1	3	5
Miss D. Pethick ...	5	0	0
Anon. ...	5	0	0
Mrs. Haslam ...	0	1	0
*Dr. Barbara Tchaykovsky ...	1	1	0

	£	s.	d.
*Mrs. Annie Clark ... ..	1	0	0
*Miss Postlethwaite ... ..	0	5	0
*Miss Mary E. Baker ... ..	1	0	0
*Miss M. Hodge ... ..	10	0	0
Mrs. Duval ... ..	0	1	0

N.B.—Several subscriptions and affiliation fees have been received too late for inclusion in the present financial year.

## British Dominions Woman Suffrage Union, War Relief Fund.

### CONTRIBUTIONS

From July 31st, 1915, to July 31st, 1916.

*(Contributions 1914—1915 are acknowledged in previous War Relief Report.)*

	£	s.	d.
Hon. Treasurer Sydney Babies' Kits Society ... ..	10	0	0
Per Mrs. Walpole (Tasmania) ... ..	27	1	0
Mrs. Thewlis (South Africa) ... ..	1	5	0
Girls' High School, per Miss Jobson (Invercargill, N.Z.) ... ..	10	0	0
Mrs. H. B. Clifford, per Mrs. Thewlis (S. Africa) ...	0	10	0
Miss Hornabrook (Australia) ... ..	0	10	0
Mrs. Morris (South Africa) ... ..	0	2	6
Mrs. McMillan (New Zealand) ... ..	0	10	0
The Misses Gwenyth and Wyndom Buckley Jones (S. Africa) ... ..	0	10	0
Miss Ellis Wilkinson, New Zealand ... ..	2	0	0
Miss Cribb (Australia) ... ..	1	0	0
— Walker, Esq. (Australia) ... ..	1	0	0
Sydney Babies' Kits Society ... ..	17	19	7

# BRITISH DOMINIONS WOMAN SUFFRAGE UNION.

## CASH STATEMENT for the year ended 31st July, 1916.

RECEIPTS.			PAYMENTS.		
	£	s. d.		£	s. d.
To New Zealand	...	9 17 8	By New Zealand — Printing, Postage and Literature	...	2 9 9
„ Australia	...	20 0 6	„ Australia—Printing, Postage and Literature	...	5 3 8
„ Canada	...	0 18 4	„ Canada—Printing, Postage and Literature	...	1 11 9
„ South Africa	...	16 6 6	„ South Africa — Printing, Postage and Literature	...	3 8 3
„ London	...	86 3 2	„ London—Printing, Postage and Literature	...	45 0 9
Cash at Bank, 1st August, 1915	...	133 6 2	„ „ Hire of Halls and Expenses of Conference	...	30 15 10
	...	0 3 2	„ „ Advertisements	...	13 17 3
				89 13 10	
			„ Cash at Bank, 31st July, 1916	...	102 7 3
				...	31 2 1
				£133 9 4	

I have compiled the foregoing statement from the books and vouchers of the British Dominions Woman Suffrage Union, and in my opinion it is correct and in accordance therewith.

5, 6 & 7, Hampden House, 3, Kingsway, London, W.C.  
9th October, 1916,

E. AYRES PURDIE,  
Certified Accountant.



# BRITISH DOMINIONS WOMAN SUFFRAGE UNION WAR RELIEF FUND.

## CASH STATEMENT for the year ended 31st July, 1916.

RECEIPTS.				PAYMENTS.			
	£	s.	d.		£	s.	d.
To Donations from New Zealand ...	...	12	10 0	By Carriage of Cases from Docks	...	23	13 6
" " " Australia—				" Postage, Printing, Stationery and Sundries	...	20	7 4
" " New South Wales ...	27	19 7		" Making Clothes for Refugees, etc.	...	27	16 3
South Australia ...	0	10 0		" School Fees ...	...	14	1 0
Queensland ...	2	0 0		" East London Federation	...	6	0 0
Tasmania ...	27	1 0		" W. F. L. Settlement	...	9	16 0
" Donations from South Africa ...	...	57	10 7	" St. John's Home for Children	...	18	8 0
" Sundry Receipts ...	...	2	5 0	" Various Societies	...	22	10 0
		0	2 6			142	12 1
" Cash at Bank, 1st August, 1915	...	72	8 1	" Cash at Bank, 31st July, 1916 ...	...	57	7 6
		127	11 6				
		£199	19 7			£199	19 7

I have compiled the foregoing statement from the books and vouchers of the British Dominions Woman Suffrage Union War Relief Fund, and in my opinion it is correct and in accordance therewith.

5, 6 & 7, Hampden House, 3, Kingsway, London, W.C.  
9th October, 1916.

E. AYRES PURDIE,  
Certified Accountant.

## WEDNESDAY, JULY 5th.

### Morning Session, 11.30 a.m.—1 p.m.

*SUBJECT: Loss of Nationality through Marriage with an Alien.  
(Business arising out of Conference in 1914.)*

Chair: Mrs. GRIFFITHS FOULKES (Western Australia), in the absence of the representative from South Africa.

MRS. GRIFFITHS FOULKES.

Ladies,—We are going to discuss the question of the Loss of Nationality by a British woman on Marriage with an Alien. I am sorry I did not know that I was to hold this honourable position this morning, and so am not prepared to address you. I will, therefore, ask Miss Macmillan, who is prepared on all points, to address you on the subject.

MISS CHRYSTAL MACMILLAN, M.A., B.Sc. (WOMEN'S  
INTERNATIONAL LEAGUE).

I have great pleasure in moving the following resolution:—

“Believing that women have an equal right with men to choose their nationality, and that this principle should be embodied in the legislation of all countries,

This meeting protests against the recent legislation which, for the first time in 1870, deprived women of the capacity of retaining their British nationality on marriage with an alien and which explicitly classes married women with ‘minors, lunatics and idiots.’

It urges the repeal of the sections of the United Kingdom Acts of 1870 and 1914, of the Canadian Act of 1914, and the Newfoundland Act of 1915, which deprive married women of this capacity.

And especially since the Governments of the other Dominions have agreed with the United Kingdom Government to bring in similar legislation, it urges the women of New Zealand, Australia and South Africa to see that the prospective Bills are so amended that married women shall not be deprived of their nationality against their will.”

During the last fifty years in most relations of life there has been steady progress in the position of women. In these fifty years women have acquired the right to education; married women have, in the Anglo-Saxon countries, with a few exceptions, acquired the right to control and use their property and wages; women have also acquired certain political rights. Here, in the old country, we vote and sit upon local councils; you in the daughter countries are further advanced. In New Zealand and Australia you have the political franchise, and we are glad to be able to recognise that Canada is also coming into line, and that in three provinces there women may now exercise the political franchise.

It is altogether different with this question of nationality. In these fifty years in nearly all the Anglo-Saxon countries women have lost the right to retain their own nationality on marriage with an alien. Before 1870 in the United Kingdom a British woman, on

marriage with an alien, did not lose her nationality. This right was taken from her in 1870. (1) In the Dominions it is difficult to find out exactly what the position is, but, inasmuch as the laws in most of the Dominions are founded on the common law of England, a woman of any Dominion, at least of those founded before 1870, would, on marriage with an alien, retain her nationality. (2) Not only is it in the British Empire that women have lost this right in these fifty years, but also in the United States of America. Up to the year 1907 the United States women citizens did not lose their nationality on marriage (3), and so this falling back covers not only our own country but other countries.

Two arguments are brought forward by those who believe that a woman should sink her personality on marriage with an alien. One is that it is so much simpler for a woman to take her husband's nationality. That is not a reason generally given for legislation. Legislation usually requires to be made more complex in order to meet the difficulties that arise. The other reason given is that all other countries do the same. When did this country, in deciding what was right, take all other countries as an example? Should we not in the British Empire set the example to all other countries? If the United Kingdom and America had not gone back in these last fifty years there would have been several hundred millions of the population of the world to whom these unjust laws did not apply.

What is the position to-day in the British Empire? In 1902 a Departmental Committee was set up to inquire into the question of British nationality, and to make recommendations as to the simplification of the Naturalisation Acts. It presented its report, but no action was taken for some years. At the Colonial Conferences held during the last five years in this country the subject has been again discussed. A Naturalisation Bill was drafted, and after amendment and consideration by the representatives of the Governments of the various Dominions, was adopted by the Colonial Conference, being called the British Nationality and Status of Aliens Bill. The idea was that this Bill should be introduced into the Legislatures of the United Kingdom and of the Dominions in order that the conditions of British citizenship should be made the same all over the British Empire. There is one curious anomaly which still exists, that a person who is created, for example, an Australian citizen by the Australian Government does not necessarily become a British citizen when he arrives in Great Britain. This is a great injustice, and we all wish to see that particular injustice remedied. It was the main intention of this Bill to remove this injustice and to bring into effect the principle:—in one part of the British Empire a British subject, in all parts of the British Empire a British subject.

This Bill was introduced and discussed in the British Parliament in the spring and summer of 1914. Those of you who were in this country at that time will remember that it was the last question before the war on which women obtained a small victory. The Bill proposed to re-enact the regulation introduced for the first time in 1870 which denaturalised a British woman marrying an alien. All the important women's organisations of the country, including the B.D.W.S.U., protested against the proposal. Cables were sent to the various British Dominions urging the women in the Dominions

(1) For details of the Law of Naturalisation throughout the British Empire see Report of the Inter-Departmentary Committee on Acts Relating to Naturalisation, 1901, Cd. 723.

(2) Canada deprived married women of this right by its Revised Statutes, 1886, chap. 113, § 22.

(3) See article, "Marriage and Nationality," by W. E. Wilkinson, in the "Canadian Times," 1915, vol. 35, which gives many interesting particulars and references.

to agitate and to support the women in the home country in this demand. We were not completely successful, but we did succeed in getting two small amendments to the Bill. One was to this effect. Under the 1870 Act the wife of a British subject who changed his nationality, who after his marriage became, say, German, or French, or Russian, automatically became German, or French, or Russian also. The amendment which the women's agitation succeeded in securing was that the wife of a British man should have the power, if he changed his nationality, to declare that she wished to remain a British subject. It is true that this amendment affects very few women. From that point of view it is of little importance, but from another point of view it is of the utmost importance. By the law of 1870 it was not possible for a wife to be a British subject unless her husband was at the same time a British subject, but this amendment makes it possible for a British woman to maintain her nationality if her husband chooses to alter his. It recognises the principle that a husband and wife may be of different nationalities, and from that point of view is of the utmost importance.

The other important alteration which already since the war has affected a large number of women is this. Under the law of 1870 a British woman married to a foreigner, on being divorced or becoming a widow, could not reacquire her British nationality till after the lapse of five years. But the amendment which we secured to the 1914 Act was to the effect that she should immediately on the death of her husband or on her divorce be able, should she so desire, to resume her British nationality.

What has happened to the Bill Overseas? Canada, I believe, was the Dominion most anxious to have it introduced, and already, before the British Parliament had passed the Bill, Canada had adopted it in its original form without these two important amendments. The consequence was that the Canadian Parliament, in order to make their Act correspond to the British Act, immediately brought in an amending Act, adding the two amendments, and thus raising the Canadian Act to the level to which we had succeeded in raising the British Act. This is very important, because it shows that if we fight for a right in one part of the British Empire we shall possibly help the fight for that right in another part of the British Empire. (Applause.) Of the other Dominions, as far as I have been able to discover, only Newfoundland has as yet adopted the Bill. It is therefore very important that Australian, New Zealand and South African women should be alive to the question. Of course, we appeal more especially to the women of Australia and New Zealand because they have more power in their hands, and we see in so many ways that they are able to influence their Legislatures. We therefore appeal especially to those women to see to it that when that Bill is introduced they insist on retaining their present rights, that women, when marrying aliens, shall not be compelled to lose their British nationality. And I am sure we shall not appeal in vain.

Before I finish I should like to say how much this question has been brought home to us by the war. The next speaker is going to give you many instances of the hardships endured by women in this country married to aliens, but it is interesting to know that in many other countries at the present moment women are considering this question and passing resolutions on the subject. In last month's issue of "Jus Suffragii," the paper of the International Women's Suffrage Alliance, you will find that the French Women's Suffrage Societies have passed a resolution on the subject. The women of Sweden, of Switzerland and of Australia are also taking it up. This is a question which will have to be solved when the war is over, and it is one to which women must be very much alive. It has not yet been taken up by feminist conferences, except by the B.D.W.S.U., in 1914 and this year. It is a question that must be solved internationally. That is why it is so essential that women should have the vote.

before any fresh international Parliaments or Conferences are set up. International agreements may be made affecting women all over the world, and if we are not alert, the corresponding laws "to simplify the conditions" may be passed in a way which is not best for the women. Law in almost every country considers the married woman as a nonentity, and women do not wish any longer to be classed, as married women are explicitly classed in this new Act, with "minors, lunatics and idiots." This question must ultimately be solved internationally. If we British women see to it that it is put right in our own Empire, we shall lead a reform that will affect the future of the women in the other countries of Europe and of the world. (Applause.)

#### MRS. FORD-SMITH (SOCIETY OF FRIENDS' WAR RELIEF WORK).

I have been asked to speak to you to-day because I have had a good deal of experience in the last two years in working amongst the wives of interned aliens in our own country as a visitor for the Friends' Committee for Helping Distressed Aliens. This Committee was organised a few days after the outbreak of war, and since then has dealt with upwards of 6,000 cases, in which we have come face to face with the difficulty of British women (for a great many of them are British) married to Germans or Austrians living in our own country during war-time. It was interesting to me (I suppose I was very ignorant) to find what an enormous number of British women were married to Germans. We found that a very large proportion—80 per cent.—of aliens in this country are married to British women, who, only on the outbreak of war, discovered what they should have realised before, that by marriage with a foreigner they had lost their own nationality and had taken that of the man they had married.

Many of these women are drawn from the domestic servant class, probably because so large a number of waiters, chefs and hotel porters are foreigners, and the suffering, hardship and disgrace that has come to these women has been perhaps harder to bear because they are often of such a very superior class, and so entirely loyal and patriotic to their own country.

The grant which the Government allows to British-born wives of interned aliens is very small, and I think, unworthy of us, viz., 11s. 6d. for a woman and 1s. 9d. a week per child; any of us who knows the cost of food and clothing now, knows that it is practically an impossibility for a woman to "make it do" without starving herself for the sake of the children. Then the Government said that the grant must be stopped, because many of the women ought to go out to work. That was the kindest thing to say to them, because none of these women want to be dependent. They hate to go for their grants to the Board of Guardians, who are not kind to them; and many of them were delighted when they were told that they were going to be allowed to work. The first thing was to get to find somebody to mind their children. Then arose a difficulty in putting their names down to get work. They were refused work week after week because they were Germans, and one woman changed her name and called herself Mrs. Simpson instead of Mrs. Schmidt. Knowing it was illegal, I went round to the police station to see what could be done. I was told, of course, she would not be allowed to do it. So I said, "But how can you expect these women to get work if they are not allowed to use their English name?" and the policeman said to me, "I don't know; go and ask the Government." Well, of course, I could not do that. The only thing to do was to try and get influence to make people realise how perfectly idiotic it was to tell these women to get work without giving them the means to get it. As one woman told me, she got the promise of work if she could dispose of her baby, so she went to the crèche, and when they heard that this small baby, who was quite innocent of the sins and evils

and troubles in the world, was called Linkenberg, no crèche would take it in. It seemed to me perfectly dreadful that a crèche in a country where it is preached that Christ loved little children should refuse to take it in.

Any account of the hardships that I could give you would last all day. I can only say that personally I feel that women should have the right to decide whether they are going to lose their nationality or not. The thing that has hurt most in the work that I have been doing is not so much actual cases of hardship but the hatred shown in the horribly unkind things which are said to these women because they can be legally called Germans. The women, of course, have said: "We are not German and we never can be German," but, of course, the enemy always has the advantage that they are according to the law German.

In the earlier days of the war we found that the women were still receiving maternity benefit, just the same as if they were married to a Britisher. A few places were very difficult about it, the authorities tried to reduce it, and did their best to prevent the women getting it, but possibly the feeling was individual rather than universal, because some women got the full grant and others got the lesser grant, which I think is a reduction of 2s. if married to a foreigner. Another particular hardship which I came up against was that according to our law, as you probably know, the infants are registered as British children simply because they are born in Britain. It is very hard for their British-born mothers to lose their nationality while their children keep it.

One of the cheerful sides to this work has been the opportunity it has given me to work for Woman Suffrage. Over and over again I have pointed it out to the women how, if they had a vote, it might have affected this question of nationality. I have rubbed it in, in season and out of season, that this is what suffragists have been working for all these years, and many of these women have come to realise that there is something in us after all. Cases of special hardship from relieving officers have given me the chance of urging the need of Women Guardians and Women Relieving Officers, and I have often been cheered by remarks such as these: "If they would send a woman to see me, I could have told her a deal more," or "There's a many injustices to women that wants altering," or "They've no right to make laws for us women without asking us what we think," all of which gave me good scope for spreading our views on the question of Woman Suffrage. (Applause.)

I have great pleasure in seconding the resolution.

MISS L. F. NETTLEFOLD, LAW TRIPOS (CAMB.),  
L.L.B. (LONDON).

It is rather an awkward position that I occupy this morning. Needless to say, as a Suffragist I am in principle heartily in favour of the resolution on the motion paper before you; nevertheless, I cannot help feeling that, as the law is at present, not only our law of England and the different Colonies, but the Continental law, a change whereby, according to the law of certain States, husband and wife could be of a different nationality would lead to such complexity in practice that in many cases perhaps more harm than good would be done to the woman who was allowed to retain her nationality on marriage. The whole question is so extremely complicated that it is very difficult to try to put it at all clearly or shortly.

When any court, either British or the court of some foreign State, has to decide a case in which there is some foreign element, when either one or other of the parties is a foreigner, or the subject matter of the contract is out of the country, or the contract itself is entered into out of the country, that court always has to decide two separate questions—first, whether it has jurisdiction at all to deal with the question, e.g., no court (I think I am right in saying) in any civilised

country will deal with any question of the right to possession of land outside its own boundaries; secondly, having decided that it has jurisdiction, it has then to decide according to what law the case before it has to be heard and decided. Take, for example, the case of an assault on an Englishman on board a French ship in British territorial waters, and the case comes up before a French court. The court may say it has jurisdiction because the ship is French. Then it has to decide whether the law which settles the dispute is British or French, and different countries would decide similar cases in quite different ways. This is only an example of the sort of thing that happens when these cases come up for decision.

Now, when the courts of any State have to decide what law is to apply in any one of these cases they have a choice, roughly, of four or five different laws. The court decides that the case before it has to be settled either in accordance with the provisions of the law of the country where the subject matter is situate, or according to the law of the place where the contract was made, or the deed committed, or according to the personal law of one or both of the parties before it. Now, it is when we come to that personal law that our trouble begins in respect of nationality. It is practically impossible to generalise on any of these things, because all countries have different laws, but, roughly speaking, questions of status and capacity depend upon the personal law of the individual, and include questions between husband and wife, parent and child, and the question of the capacity of a married woman to contract, etc. (In most countries her capacity is more or less limited.) As far as English law goes, the personal law of an individual is the law of his or her domicile, that is to say, the law of the country where he or she has taken up a permanent abode, e.g., if a Frenchman is living in England permanently his personal law is, according to English law, English. This test of domicile is adopted by Great Britain, and, roughly speaking, is the law of the British Empire and also of the Latin American States; but all the Continental countries, with the exception of Denmark (I think no others), take as the test for the personal law of an individual his or her nationality. That is to say, a Frenchman's personal law is, according to the law of the Continental countries, the law of France, a German's personal law is the law of Germany, and so on. Well, that works out like this. If a question between husband and wife, for argument's sake, comes up for decision before an English court, and the husband and wife are domiciled in England, that question will be decided according to the provision of the English law, no matter what their nationality. There may be all sorts of exceptions, but that is the general principle. If it came up in France it would be decided by the national law of the people concerned. Where the husband and wife are of different nationalities, the wife has certain rights in respect of her husband without his being under corresponding obligations; so that, e.g., if an English wife is married to a Frenchman in France, and any question between them comes up in the French courts, there will be a hopeless position, because, according to French law, unless there has been some marriage contract, there will be what is called a "*communite de biens*" according to the law (French) of the husband, which is not recognised according to the law (English) of the wife. Now what on earth are you going to do? I do not for a moment suggest that it is impossible to bring about an alteration, and it is important that the benefit of retaining her nationality should, when possible, be conferred on a woman, but I do not believe it is possible to do it in one country at a time. It would need an international conference, and the thing has to be worked out very carefully, and, if possible, for the majority of European countries at once.

Miss Macmillan has referred you to the history of the rule so far as Great Britain is concerned, and has pointed out that originally by

the old Common Law a woman did retain her nationality on marriage. Even by the earlier Act, if she married a foreigner, she retained her nationality, and then by the 1870 Naturalisation Act we have the rule which was retained in the 1914 Act, that a woman takes the nationality of her husband. The reason for this was that communication with the Continent was increasing; it was found that in practice this question of double nationality simply did not work. So the real reason for the adoption of the present rule was convenience, simply a matter of practical convenience. It was found to be almost essential, or, at any rate, highly desirable, to come into line with other countries on that subject. In the same way as communication between America and the Continent increased, America also came into line, until now there are only two instances, Spain and Venezuela, that have not the rule that husband and wife are not of the same nationality. And we have that same rule when we maintain that husband and wife must be of the same domicile; that works out to the same thing as the corresponding provision in our system.

I am afraid this is a very short and mixed outline of the subject; but it is a very mixed subject, and I merely wish to point out that it is very dangerous to alter one country's law on the point of the nationality of a married woman while it is held by so many countries that an individual's personal law is that of his or her nationality. (Applause.)

#### MR. LAURENCE HOUSMAN.

I should like to compliment Miss Nettlefold on her speech, because while she was putting a point of view which is opposed to the point of view of the other speakers, she did not in the least put our backs up. The spirit of her address was quite charming, and I think if I could have been converted to the point of view that her line was the lesser of two evils, or the greater of two goods, Miss Nettlefold would have converted me. But she put forward early in her speech the difficulty that arose when sailors on shipboard were of different nationalities. Does she suggest it would be better to make all sailors adopt the nationality of the ship that they are on? That seems to me an impossible remedy. It is surely more important to keep to a world-wide principle; to go ahead on the principle that blood may keep its nationality, that blood shall not have its nationality taken away from it against its will. Now, Miss Nettlefold has told us that it does not work. It worked for a long time. The English law has only been altered in comparatively recent times. There may have been complications. I think it was a good thing that there were complications. But when England found that she was out of line with other countries, unfortunately she came into line on the wrong principle, instead of holding out and making it very uncomfortable and very inconvenient that there should be a wrong principle establishing itself in other countries when international intercourse was forging ahead.

Now, I would like to get right back to the principle of the whole question. I look with the very gravest suspicion at compulsory privileges (if you call this benefit for the married woman a privilege), and I like to know their origin and their history. I do not think that the origin of this privilege of the married woman is sufficiently untainted by the laws of inheritance and of property. You may say that under certain conditions it is protective of individual rights. The moustrap is protective of the mouse from the cat, but it does not make the mouse free; similarly, going back to the time when the institution of slavery existed, one could mention certain slave laws which were protective of the slave, but which did not make him a free man. It helped to make the system of slavery more tolerable, to bring it more into line with the slowly developing ideas of humanity, and so to perpetuate it.



Now, you may say that under certain modern conditions it is advantageous for the woman to have her husband's nationality thrust upon her; but I think wherever you look into conditions you will find that what makes it advantageous is the fact that these modern conditions are unequal and restrictive, and that it would not be advantageous if we removed those restrictions and inequalities from the married state. Take a compulsory motherhood of ten children, imposed by the husband's marital right; well, that requires more than the covering of a bishop's apron (and a bachelor bishop's apron at that), in order to make it either advantageous or a privilege. Wherever you have benefits imposed upon women as women, they should be suspected. It seems to me that the advocates of this differentiation are exactly in the same position as the Anti-Suffragists who say that votelessness is an advantage to women, and therefore votelessness must be imposed even on those who consider it no advantage. It is an artificial differentiation which is not necessary, but which is imposed by unequal conditions persistently maintained in various countries. People may call it a privilege to be carried about from one nationality to another without having a say in the matter if you exercise your natural right to marry, but that does not make it so. These privileges depending on inequalities are only useful to stave off a much-needed revolution; what we need is an international conference of women to help on and not to stave off much needed revolutions. (Applause.) And so it seems to me that when you are up against these complicated conditions which Miss Nettlefold has put before you, the only real safety in law making is, whenever possible, to make the law alike for men and women, and if this does not work well, then you may be quite sure it shows abuses and inequalities to exist with regard to one or other of the two interested parties. Thus by showing up the abuses you get on to right ground for altering the law.

Now, let me put before you an example. Quite recently it has been proposed in the Press that there should be a tax upon bachelors. That tax on bachelors comes very much home to me, and I should strenuously resist it, unless a tax were laid also on spinsters. You will see, on the face of it, that it would be extremely unfair to compel bachelors to be taxed without compelling spinsters to meet them half way. In my case it would be very much like compelling a conscientious objector to take the field with no one under any obligation to supply him with arms, ammunition or fodder. I should have no escape from that tax until somebody else was taxed into marrying me. But it would, of course, be extremely unfair to tax spinsters unless they were also given equal facilities for independence, equal privileges, equal wages, unless, in a word, you level up all round. Therefore, if you get this tax put upon bachelors, agitate also for a tax upon spinsters as the most direct step to a really fundamental reform of unequal conditions.

Now, is it advantageous to the State for women to take up the nationality of the country into which they marry and come to live? I think it is so. If so, let the State offer them an inducement. Let it offer them free naturalisation if the certificate of naturalisation is taken up at the time of the marriage ceremony, or (what I think would be better still) at the time of the registration of the first child of the marriage. Marriage is a comparatively unimportant thing to the State until it results in children, but when, as a result of the marriage, there is an asset to the country in new life, there may then be a very considerable advantage to the State in encouraging the mother of the child to accept nationality; there may also be advantage to her in receiving it. But it should still be permissive and not compulsory; a woman should be free to take that advantage or leave it. I think we might also have the same inducement offered to a man domiciled in the country and married to a woman of the country, so that he might be led, either at marriage or at the birth

of the first child; to take up nationality. I believe it now costs £5 to be naturalised. My suggestion is that under certain conditions free naturalisation should be obtainable. But as things stand now women are doubly penalised by the State, which says, "Heads I win and tails you lose!" That is what is happening to-day. In war-time you throw over the naturalised foreign woman; her naturalisation by marriage is proved only a paper naturalisation after all, for you pass an Act of Parliament which penalises foreign origin; yet at the same time you insist on the denaturalisation of British women as foreigners also! And you have it in war-time that British-born women are even turned out of their homes if they happen to be in areas prohibited to foreigners! That comes of the State going on the principle of "Heads I win, tails you lose," and giving the married woman no charter that will meet war conditions. It may be in a materialistic way advantageous to the State, but I think it is disgraceful and dishonourable for the State to do it; and I am very sorry that there was not a revolt of British-born women against that condition of things when we went to war. (Applause.)

#### LADY ABERCONWAY.

A very important view of this matter has not been touched upon yet at this very interesting Conference. When our Government declares that an Englishwoman married to an alien loses her nationality, it has not power to bestow upon her the full nationality of the country to which her husband belongs. Therefore, under this law the English woman married to an alien may be deprived of any nationality whatever and have no right of standing in any court. I should like to ask Miss Nettlefold, who is an expert on these questions, if she can tell us what rights the French give to an English woman married to a Frenchman when she is still domiciled in this country. Now, we have a very important object-lesson in the action of Germany in this matter. We have heard a good deal about Englishwomen married to Germans becoming alien enemies and registered as such. Well, you are perhaps aware that Germany has refused to keep these women. Germany is sending money over to keep German women who are married to interned Germans, but they will not keep the Englishwomen who are married to Germans; consequently such women are being kept by our own authorities (if they get any allowance at all). I have a letter from a man in Turkey, who points out that when an Englishwoman has lost her nationality by marriage with a Turk, Turkey does not receive her and give her nationality unless she becomes Mohammedan. Therefore, you see that our Government in this matter has acted entirely without consideration for the interests of women. I had a letter from Australia which stated that nationality naturally followed marriage. Well, that is a very narrow view to take of the question. It does not naturally follow marriage at all. The status of women is fixed by the deliberate action of the various States assembled in council, and I was exceedingly sorry to see a view expressed concerning nationality which is inaccurate and misleading. I think a very just plan would be to re-enact the old English law that no Englishwoman domiciled with her alien husband in England loses her English nationality. That is a very clear issue and would not give rise to the complications which Miss Nettlefold suggests. Further, when such a woman is domiciled in a foreign country she must submit to the laws of that country, whether they give her full national privileges or deny them, and it must always be an advantage to a woman British born to retain any British rights she may have had and to have the right to appeal to the British Consuls if she is in trouble. (Applause.) British Consuls can do much to help women in legal difficulties, but if the sufferer is by British law a foreigner, she has no claim upon our representatives in foreign lands, and they have no standing to help her in any court.

## MISS NETTLEFOLD.

I think I said before that in all civilised countries, with the exception of Spain and Venezuela, the rule is that a woman adopts the nationality of her husband on marriage. If an Englishwoman marries a Frenchman, by English and by French law she is French. It is because universality is so valuable that I am very anxious to make it clear that the whole question wants to be treated so carefully.

When it comes to a marriage with a Turk or a member of some other non-Christian country, the position of the wife may depend on where the marriage was contracted, and whether there are other wives of the said gentleman, and whether the marriages was recognised in England; generally speaking the possibly polygamous marriage of a white British subject is not recognised.

If two foreigners marry the validity of the marriage depends on several things. As concerns the formalities of the marriage ceremony, it depends on the law of the country where marriage was contracted; as concerns the personal capacity of the parties to marry, it depends on their respective personal laws. That is the trouble of having that perplexing conflict between the tests of domicile and nationality. Some countries are more particular about religion than others. It would be hopeless to try and go into all the exceptions now.

As to the rule suggested that an Englishwoman who marries an alien and remains domiciled in England should retain her nationality, that would give rise to no trouble, because in any case the mutual rights of the parties depend, according to English law, on their domicile.

Different nations take different tests of loss of nationality. There are some countries which, when one of their subjects becomes naturalised in another State, do not consider that he thereby loses his original nationality—a German, for example, does not *ipso facto* lose his nationality on becoming naturalised in another country. Such a man would be, according to English law, English as long as he is in England or any other country, but when he is in Germany, that country will treat him as German, and according to German law he would at the same time remain German. As far as the international aspect goes, it may be accounted for by adopting the general principle of domicile as the test of inter-marital relations or by laws providing that simply for this purpose the woman must be of her husband's nationality or the nationality of their mutual choice so long as they choose the same. But the whole trend of the movement of Continental law is the other way, i.e., towards emphasising nationality as the test of personal law, and away from the British view of taking domicile as the test.

## MRS. GRIFFITHS FOULKES.

Miss Nettlefold has raised the question of domicile. It is true that the wife follows the domicile of her husband, but that is another point that requires looking into, and the law of domicile is perhaps more in need of amendment than the law of nationality, because so many things are determined by domicile. Take, for example, a woman married in Scotland. If her husband comes and lives permanently in England, the divorce laws which affect the couple become the divorce laws of England, and there are cases where men have changed their domicile for this very purpose, to defeat their wife's claim to divorce. In the same way a man may change his domicile with a view to changing the laws of inheritance; that has also been done, and is another thing that requires amendment. I would like to give one instance of practical inconvenience due to the fact that a woman is made to belong to the nationality of her husband. A friend of mine was going abroad; she required a passport. She was

a Scotchwoman, but her husband had happened to be born in Salonica. They did not inquire into her antecedents, but they insisted on inquiring into the history of her husband's family for the last 250 years before they gave her a passport. Now, it was possible for that woman to obtain her passport because her husband gave her every assistance in his power, but the circumstances might have been very different.

#### MISS NEWCOMB.

The law of nationality in Australia and New Zealand was framed in each case intentionally to secure to a married woman the same freedom as regards nationality as a married man possesses. But the whole question of nationality in the Dominions is subordinate to Imperial law, and under Imperial law the women of Australia and New Zealand lose a right which the better laws of their own land retained for them.

Resolution proposed by Miss Macmillan, seconded by Mrs. Ford-Smith, and carried with one dissident.

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The Women's Liberal League of N.S.W., Australia, is of opinion that a British woman who of her own free will enters into the marriage state with an alien, should cease by virtue of this Act to be a British subject and adopts the nationality of her husband. The clergyman or registrar should, however, make the woman fully aware of the fact that by this marriage she will lose her rights as a British citizen.

As far as the W.L.L. has been able to obtain definite information, it is of opinion that the interests of women have been fairly dealt with by the Act passed in 1914, and can see no reason for urging the Commonwealth Parliament to reject any of the clauses referring to the position of British women married to aliens.

Signed, LAURA BOGUE LUFFMAN,

Org. Sec. W.L.L. of N.S.W., December, 1915.

"In almost every country it is the rule that illegitimate children belong to the State of which the mother is the subject. English law appears to form the only exception. In English law illegitimate issue of English women abroad acquire the nationality of their place of birth, since it is by statute only that children born beyond the kingdom are admitted to the privilege of being British subjects, and no statute exists which applies to children born out of wedlock. At the same time, as the old law of England imposing allegiance upon the issue of strangers in virtue of the soil has not been abrogated with respect to illegitimate children, the illegitimate children of foreign mothers who have given birth to them in England are considered to be English."

From a paper contributed by M. E. de Villiers (Mrs.), Student of Law, Univ. of South Africa.

## Afternoon Session, 2.30 p.m.—4.30 p.m.

### OVERSEAS SUFFRAGE MEETING.

Greetings from Women's Organisations Overseas were read by the Hon. Sec., Miss Newcomb.

CHAIR: MRS. PETHICK LAWRENCE.

I think it is a very great honour and privilege to be present at such a gathering as this, and also to be asked to move the following resolution :—

“The British Dominions Woman Suffrage Union in Conference assembled heartily congratulates the people of Canada on the suffrage victories gained in Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta, and earnestly hopes that throughout the great Dominion of Canada the principle of democracy will be completely vindicated in the immediate future by the granting of full citizen rights to women.”

There is no doubt that this resolution will be unanimously and heartily carried by the meeting this afternoon. The thought of these suffrage victories in Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta gives a special meaning to the report which we have been reading to-day in our papers, of the speech given by Mr. Balfour last night in the House of Commons to the Overseas Branches of the Empire Parliamentary Association. This is what Mr. Balfour said :—

“It will be one of the marvels of history that in the early days of this war the Empire as one man showed itself resolved to join with the Mother Country in the great fight to maintain the ideals of world freedom which it was the boast of our race to have spread throughout the world.”

And it is significant, is it not, that the man who was chosen to reply to Mr. Balfour was Sir George Foster, the Canadian Minister for Trade and Commerce, and this is a quotation from his speech. He took up this idea of love of liberty, of freedom and of justice, of the spreading of great world ideals, and he emphasised it in this way :—

“The love of liberty, of freedom and of justice, which has grown up through the working of forces during 2,000 years, has been so implanted in the seed and spawn of this Empire that no distance, no geographical or climatic differences have been able to eliminate these influences which have been its salt and savour, and which have saved the Empire before and are saving it now.”

Now, my friends, these are fine words, words so great that we might almost be afraid to use them were it not for the fact that this very idea of justice and freedom had been lately so practically demonstrated by the people of our own race and blood in those three Provinces of Canada. It is a comforting and fortifying thing that now, even during the period of war, while the sons of the Empire are fighting with the thoughts of liberty in their hearts and the name of freedom on their lips, the people in that part of the Empire should have given absolute proof that they are ready to spread world ideals of freedom, not by words only, but by example. And, after all, that is the only effective way of spreading world ideals of freedom.

Women, we represent this afternoon all the great Commonwealths that are included in what is called the British Empire. To-day we meet, as it were, in the house of sorrow. We meet as

people who watch anxiously through the night. The lives of those who are dear to us are jeopardised. Many of the ideals that have inspired our love are at stake. Just as those who are watching through the night welcome with special joy the rising of the morning star which heralds the dawn, so into our hearts at this time of shadow has come a ray of light and hope from the news of these victories in Canada.

It sometimes seems as if the whole world were falling back into barbarism, yet there is reason to believe that humanity is making progress, though slowly, yet steadily, towards the ultimate triumph of justice and of love. These three Provinces of Canada have come forward to ratify the action taken in the first place by New Zealand, and afterwards by Australia, and have vindicated before the world that principle of democracy which is the very soul of Government for free peoples. At any period such an act would have lifted up our hearts, but it is doubly significant now. And why doubly significant now? Because this war is like a furnace which is melting up all the elements of the old systems of Government. These systems have been put into the melting pot; they have to be re-fashioned and re-framed; the world is being swept bare for plans and projects of reconstruction. Many statesmen throughout our Empire have grasped this truth, and have expressed the necessity—yes, and the determination to meet this necessity—for change. Most notable, perhaps, are the words of Mr. Asquith and the words of Mr. Lloyd George. No doubt they will be fresh in your minds, but I want to remind you of them once more. You remember how last month, when the Prime Minister was at Ladybank, and was addressing his constituents, he said:—

“When the war comes to an end, when the reign of peace is re-established, we shall have to take stock of the Empire, of our international relations.”

He went on in his speech to say something of the same thing that Mr. Balfour said last night, to recount the heroism and devotion with which the sons of every part of the Empire had united with the Mother Country in upholding ideals of liberty. He then went on to add these words:—

“That is the Imperial record. It will never be possible to revert to our old methods of counsel and of Government. The fabric of the Empire will have to be re-fashioned, and the relations not only between Great Britain and Ireland, but between the United Kingdom and our Dominions, will, of necessity be brought, and brought promptly, under close and connected review. Such, at least, is my opinion, and I respectfully commend this consideration to my countrymen both in this country and in Ireland.”

These are very significant and very prophetic words, and they were endorsed again by Mr. Lloyd George when he published his proposals for the settlement of Ireland. He said:

“Immediately after the war an Imperial Conference of representatives from all the Dominions of the Empire must be held to consider the future Government of the Empire, including the question of the Government of Ireland.” And we add: “Including the question of the self-government of women.” (Applause.)

Well, it is a great idea, this Imperial Conference, is it not? If this idea eventuates, what will it mean? It will mean the extension of the principle of human democracy on a scale that has never been seen in the world before; it will mean a demonstration before the whole world of the strength of the union which is founded upon freedom; it will show that national and international security is based only upon liberty and justice and democracy. (Applause.)

Now, if this Conference takes place, the representatives who come to attend it, say, in the cases of Australia and New Zealand and certain parts of Canada, will represent all the men and women of their com-

munity, while the representatives of the Mother Country and of other Dominions will stand only for the male half of their country. As Abraham Lincoln once said: "You cannot have a people half slave and half free." No, the enfranchisement of women has now become an Imperial question, and it is for us, the women of the great Commonwealths within the Empire, to unite in the demand that women shall now be granted self-government, and shall be recognised throughout the Empire as a sovereign half of a sovereign people.

I say that the question of women's enfranchisement has become an Imperial question of immediate issue and importance, and, my friends, it has become more than an Imperial question, it has become, in days like these, an international question. This terrible war which has fallen upon the world has taken us by horror and surprise. There is a feeling that is universal in every section of the population and in every country of the world, that such a terrible disaster as this must never happen again. (Applause.) That humanity cannot bear it; that war to-day, fraught as it is with every kind of scientific machinery for destruction, has become obsolete, impossible, if the human race is to continue. But, after all, I believe we all recognise that war is only one system of a manner of life which has been pursued by the people of all nations. It springs from the disregard of human life, it springs from the valuation of property higher than the valuation of human beings. This disregard of the sanctity of human life has had many effects. It is to that cause that we owe the disregard of infant life; it is to that that we owe the crippling of the lives of our people by crowding them into slums; it is to that that we owe the underpayment of hundreds of thousands of people, the beating of people down to the last verge upon which they can live, which is practically starvation. All these things spring from the same root as that from which war springs, and the time has come when it is necessary, not only for the welfare of our Empire, but it is necessary for the whole world, that that section of humanity which represents the motherhood of the world, that section of humanity which by its very vocation, the creation and culture of human life, must understand and understand supremely the sacredness of human life, it is time that that half of humanity found expression.

I have told the story before, I nearly always tell it when I speak; it was told by a friend of mine the other day who was visiting some wounded soldiers in hospital. This friend went up to one bed-ridden man and asked him whether he could give him any books or papers, and the man said: "No, it is no good attempting to read. I am always seeing over again, and hearing over again, the things I saw and heard out there." My friend said to him, thinking it would perhaps relieve his mind to talk: "What made most impression on you?" He said: "Well, the thing that I never can get out of my mind, the thing that I am hearing all the time, is the crying of the wounded lads when the guns ceased firing—that crying for their mothers." Now, that is the universal human cry. That cry for the mother knows no difference of language or of nationality; it is the same in whatever tongue it is uttered, it is as common to humanity as the wail of the babe when it is taken from its mother's womb. The age-old tragedy of the war has been the helplessness of all the mothers to answer that cry. And because individual mothers are helpless, the mothers of the world must be organised as a great force; they must be organised in order that they may answer that cry and save their children. Women must recognise that all the children in the world are their children. It is only by the organisation of this motherhood force, it is only by the political emancipation of all women, that we shall be empowered as women of the whole world to say that the nations must find some means for satisfying their ambitions and for settling their disputes other than by shedding the blood of our sons, by blighting the lives of our daughters,

and by starving the future of our children. We look forward to the time when the women of all the world, solid in their motherhood, united by their one vocation and their one supreme interest, shall form together a great party that shall stand for this and this only—the safeguarding, the culture, and the development of the human race. That programme will include many things; it will include the saving of infant life, it will include the education of the young, it will include the care of the old, it will include the proper payment of all industrial workers, and it will include the banishment from the world of the future of the terrible curse of war that has blighted the world in the past, and that is blighting the world of to-day. So, then, just as we refuse to be bound to the narrow limits of nationality, so we refuse to be bound even within the wider limits of Empire, so will we demand to be included in the life of all the world, so will we take the children of humanity as our children. It is with this thought that I now put to you the resolution that I have already read. (Applause.)

The resolution was carried unanimously.

### MRS. PETHICK LAWRENCE.

I have now to call on the Delegates to give us some account of the position of women as citizens in the Dominions Overseas.

### MRS. HERRING (NEW SOUTH WALES, AUSTRALIA).

Mrs. Herring (delegate, Women's Liberal League of New South Wales), who regretted that as she had left New South Wales more than a year ago she could not give an account of the very latest developments in that State, spoke first of women as municipal voters. Women cannot be elected to municipal offices in the Commonwealth except in the State of South Australia. The Citizens' Association was formed in 1914, under the auspices of the National Council of Women, to educate women to take more interest in municipal matters. This Association, supported by the W.L.L., has insisted on the closer inspection of dairies, improvements in Town-planning and Housing Acts, and on the reduction of the dust nuisance and the fly pest. Full local option, secured by the woman's vote, leads to a reduction of hotels\* at every election. Women's political enfranchisement is an unmixed benefit to the community. In political matters most women work solidly for reform, irrespective of party. They have secured the closing of all hotels at 6 p.m. during the war, and they are still working for hospitals for inebriates. The maternity endowment is due to the women's work. The "baby bonus" of £5 is presented directly to every mother on the production of the proof of her child's birth. In all elections and at political conferences women meet men on a completely equal footing. Women can belong to men's leagues as well as their own, though the office bearers are generally men. In educational matters women are working to get continuation schools for girls and to establish a Chair of Domestic Science at Sydney University. The Federal Government since 1903 has given men and women employes equal pay for equal work, and the State Parliament is being urged to adopt the same principle. In New South Wales the women still have some disabilities. They are debarred from the legal profession, and cannot enter the Agricultural College. The wife has no share in her husband's property or income, and the father alone may decide who is to be the children's guardian, and what is to be their religion. The programmes of both political parties show that they regard the woman's vote as a very important factor, and each of them strives to secure it by promises of radical social reforms. All statesmen, even those who opposed the introduction of

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\* This word in Australia includes all licensed houses.—EDITORS.



Woman's Suffrage, vie with one another in claiming the credit of this reform, while they combine in giving unqualified praise to its effects. All agree in maintaining that it has raised the tone of political life and beneficially extended the sphere of social legislation.

### MRS. KEITH ADAM (WESTERN AUSTRALIA).

Mrs. Keith Adam gave a short account of the work of the Women's Service Guild, Western Australia, for which she stood as delegate. This Guild (non-party) has just issued the report of its sixth year of work (1914-15). During the year the Guild may claim to have secured the following among several other reforms:—(1) An amendment to the Lunacy Act, by which a woman is appointed Official Visitor to the Hospital for the Insane. (2) The promise of the appointment of women to sit in the children's courts. (3) The abandonment of the proposed maternity ward at the Perth Public Hospital (a most inadequate and unsuitable proposal), and a definite promise from the Government of a separate maternity hospital, including a properly equipped training school for midwives at West Subiaco (a suburb of the capital). The matter of the greatest interest and importance to the rest of the Empire is, however, the action of the Guild towards measures for preventing the spread of venereal disease.

The Women's Service Guild combated by all means in their power, but unsuccessfully, the passing of the Amending Health Bill by the Western Australian Legislature. Though some of the amendments have rendered the measure less objectionable, at first sight, the Guild is of opinion that these amendments only tend to narrow down the Bill to one class and one sex. Besides, the measure is such that it will be very difficult to follow the administration.

At a large public meeting held in the Town Hall by representatives of the women's organisations of Perth (convened by the Women's Service Guild), a resolution embodying an emphatic protest against the principles of compulsory notification, compulsory examination, and compulsory detention with regard to venereal disease was forwarded to the Government and to the Press. At the same meeting it was decided that a "Citizens' Vigilance Committee" should be formed to see that the Act is absolutely impartially administered as to sex and class.

The Women's Service Guild sends a monthly letter to the women's Press in the other States of Australia. The monthly letter following the meeting just referred to contained the following:—"It will interest the women in the sister States to know that the following resolution was passed in the Upper House (W.A.):—'That in the opinion of this House it is desirable that the Government should approach the Governments of the other States of the Commonwealth with the object of endeavouring to arrive at an agreement between all the States as to the methods to be adopted to stamp out venereal diseases, so that laws may be enacted in each State to deal with the evil.' It now lies with similar organisations in the other States to combat compulsory measures as being a means of lessening this grave evil, and we trust they will be more successful than we have been. Signed by the President (Mrs. Rischbieth) and the Hon. Sec. (Mrs. Le Souef)."

The Women's Service Guild is giving its support to the establishment of an Inter-State women's paper for the Commonwealth.

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\* It was mentioned at the Conference that a number of women of high standing in Western Australia gave their support to the Health Bill referred to, on the ground that the pressing needs of the moment demanded it.—EDITORS.

**MRS. BEAMISH LANE (SOUTH AFRICA), late Secretary W.E.A.U.**

Speaking as an official representative of the Women's Enfranchisement Association of the Union of South Africa, an Association comprising 26 societies, I feel it a privilege to be present at this Conference, and I should like to express my appreciation of this great opportunity. The women of South Africa are only just beginning to fight for their political freedom, and they can learn much from their more experienced sisters. Miss Hodge, on her memorable tour through South Africa, gave us a clear exposition of the effects of woman's suffrage in Australasia, and I find that this, printed in a leaflet, has been of inestimable help in silencing opposition and in convincing waverers. The progress of the suffrage movement in the Union of South Africa has been retarded by wars, by grave internal social and political disturbances, by geographical conditions, and by the great differences in the qualification for the franchise in the different Provinces. The Suffrage Leagues in the towns have been most helpful in hastening the enfranchising of women in municipalities. In Natal all women possessing the male civic qualification can vote for the members of the Municipal Council, and by an ordinance of that body they also have a right to sit on municipal bodies and upon hospital boards. Eschowe (Zululand) was the first town to elect a woman on the local Board, and Maritzburg elected the first woman Town Councillor, Mrs. Theodore Woods, who was also elected on to the Hospital Board. In 1914 a Labour majority in the Transvaal Provincial Council gave women the municipal vote on a three months' residential qualification, and also the right to sit on the Town Council and Hospital Boards. A Women's Municipal Association was at once formed to educate women in municipal matters and to secure their return as Councillors. In 1915 three women were elected. The number of women's societies in the different Provinces of South Africa are a proof of the newly awakened activity of members of my sex. In Johannesburg alone there are 40 Women's Societies. In Maritzburg and Johannesburg women have been appointed to attend Courts in cases that concern women and children. In Durban women sit on the Juvenile Advisory Board. In Capetown there are women police patrols doing excellent work, and in the Transvaal Dr. Anna Cleaver has been appointed Assistant Medical Inspector of Schools. In 1913 a test case was brought forward in Capetown to enable women to practise as lawyers, but the judge decided that the Union Parliament must pass an amending Statute before that right could be gained. The actual achievements of the women of South Africa may appear small, but the almost universal awakening to civic and political responsibilities is an augury of great hope for the future.

**MRS. GERTRUDE RICHARDSON (POLITICAL EDUCATION LEAGUE OF MANITOBA, CANADA).**

Extracts from written speech, read by  
**MISS D. PETHICK.**

**WOMAN'S RE-CONSTRUCTIVE TASK—THE IDEAL AND THE PRACTICAL.**

Far too long have submission and resignation been preached to women; but that day has passed away for ever. We are learning now that to submit to wrong is a great and terrible sin against God and humanity. It is a cowardly refusal to face evil things and to enter into combat with them.

We must demand the obliteration of sex barriers in every department of life.

We alone must decide what is our "sphere," where is our "place," for woman's place is everywhere. Yes, in municipal, school, rural, provincial, national, international, and super-national affairs every place must be opened to us as to our brothers. Together we must rebuild, as together we shall both serve and govern, but never more must we allow our share of the task to be in other hands than our own.

To-day we meet together in spirit the women of the British Empire, and we know that with us are the women of the world—with us in desire, in hope, and in aspiration. Canada sends loving greetings to the sisterhood of the British Empire.

MRS. PETHICK LAWRENCE.

I have now to ask Miss Britten, of S. Africa, to propose a resolution.

MISS BRITTEN.

I wish to propose the following resolution:—

"That this Conference, recognising that equal citizenship of women with men is fundamental to all reform, urges all women in Great Britain and Ireland and in the Dominions Overseas, who are not yet enfranchised, to work more earnestly than ever to obtain their full citizen rights."

I have great pleasure in proposing this resolution. I think it is one of our fundamental tenets as suffragists, and therefore nothing that I could say on the spur of the moment would materially help. The speakers that have gone before, both this morning and afternoon, have brought that out very fully. This morning the speakers, more than anything else, showed that in the countries where women have no vote their rights can be done away with easily, and the speakers this afternoon from the enfranchised Dominions of Australia and New Zealand have shown conclusively that where women have the vote there they are listened to and their voice has to be heard in politics. (Applause.)

MRS. BEAMISH LANE (SOUTH AFRICA).

In seconding this resolution I should like to say, on behalf of South Africa, it is more important that the women there should obtain the vote than in almost any other portion of the British Empire, and if you knew the conditions of life there I think you would agree with me. We have there an enormous native population, and until women are able to make their voice heard in the councils of the nation that native question is being constantly shelved, for Government is afraid to tackle it. In one of the Provinces of South Africa, the Cape, the Kaffir man has a vote and the white woman has none. That is enough, if nothing else, to make South African women work for the vote. I have very much pleasure in seconding this resolution. (Applause.)

Resolution carried unanimously.

MRS. PETHICK LAWRENCE.

I have now to ask Mrs. Bracher, of New Zealand, to propose a resolution which has come from that Dominion.

MRS. BRACHER (NEW ZEALAND).

As a representative of the Canterbury Women's Institute of New Zealand, I have received instructions to request this Conference to discuss the question of permanent peace—that is, the means of preventing future wars. The resolution which I propose is the following:—

"That this Conference is of opinion that in order to prevent future wars an International Parliament should be established, to regulate all disputes between nations by means of reason instead of force."

If we consider the gradual evolution of mankind from a state of savagery to the civilisation of the twentieth century, we find that this great advance has been brought about chiefly by the fact that men renounced their primitive right to settle personal quarrels by means of fighting, and ultimately agreed to have these matters decided before law courts, whose power is given to them by Parliament, and whose authority is supported by the police. So we gained security of life and property, and individual freedom within the State. But this reign of duly authorised law and order stops at the boundaries of each country. There is a system of international law, written and unwritten, regulating inter-State affairs in times of peace and of war, called "the law of nations"; but this system is very incomplete; it lacks efficient sanction, for there is no permanent supreme authority to give sanction, and no police force to uphold its rules and regulations; and there is no mandate for it from the British public or the Overseas Dominions. It rests chiefly on power, not on right, and a large sphere of inter-State relations is regarded as being outside the domain of this law. Now, the essence of law is that it regulates conduct and rights in the community. So international law, in the same way, ought to be duly authorised, and ought to regulate conduct and rights in the community of nations. When a dispute, said to affect the national honour or vital interests, arises between two nations, who settles this dispute? Often a few persons—an autocratic monarch or a military clique—who may or may not represent Democracy. A few men, seated safely in the ivory towers of secret diplomacy, spin and weave a web of difficulties; an unscrupulous Press raises a dark cloud of national prejudice, hatred and passion, and suddenly the nations are plunged into war. Then much of this fabric of international law proves itself to be as substantial as a cobweb across the mouth of a cannon; it is ruthlessly swept away, and chaos and anarchy rule in its place. And we women, having observed this strange process, wish to-day to protest and to suggest a better method of settling national disputes.

After this war it is certain that public opinion in all the belligerent countries, and in the neutral countries, too, will loudly call on statesmen to organise other methods than the arbitrament of battle. Not long ago, Sir Edward Grey said: "We do not believe in war as the preferable method of settling disputes between nations. . . . Unless mankind learns from this war to avoid war, the struggle will have been fought in vain." In these words I think our Foreign Secretary expresses the public opinion of the British Empire.

The next forward step, and the most urgently important step in civilisation, affecting the future of the whole race, is to moralise international relations, and to inaugurate a reign of law between the nations, presided over by a permanent world tribunal, whose sanction will be the consent and support of all civilised nations. Only by such means will a true community of states be formed, and the permanent peace of the world be secured. To establish this tribunal will be a difficult task, but it is not an impossible one for wise statesmen to accomplish.

Various kinds of machinery have been suggested for peacefully regulating inter-State affairs—councils, conferences, conventions, leagues, conciliation and arbitration. But all these lack efficient sanction and a democratic basis. After the experience of the last two years, the person who places confidence in signed treaties, rules and declarations will be singularly optimistic. In the resolution put before this meeting the word Parliament is used for the world-tribunal, because what is needed is a complete reorganisation of international law; and a Parliament has supreme legislative power, and ought to have the democratic basis without which no such institution can be safely established. The resolution, of course, does not com-

mit this Conference to any particular scheme; it asserts the principle that the nations must submit to law and to right in the settlement of their disputes. Modern Parliaments are more quickly established than was the British Constitution, which is still far from perfect. From one of the most recently established Parliaments, the Russian Duma, a representative lately in London brought a message to the effect that the Duma wishes to have an International Parliament established. There is much support for this idea. Even from enemy countries come echoes of such a plan. Mr. Asquith says he believes in a "real European partnership, based on the recognition of equal right, and established and enforced by the common will." But why only European? Why not a world partnership? Comrades, do we not believe that the goal of the race is co-operation, justice and harmony between women and men, between states and nations, and between races? It is possible that the purpose of the Creator of the universe for this small earth—as it moves in space among a myriad stars and planets—will not be fulfilled until the races of mankind are as one united family. Standing as we do now, in a dark night of storm and tempest, of sorrow and suffering, let us be courageous. For already, glowing in the rosy dawn of a brilliant future day, we see a vision of that noble temple of humanity—"the Parliament of Man, the Federation of the World." Let me add two words to the late Laureate's verse and say, "The Parliament of Man and Woman, the Federation of the World." I ask you now to make help to make this vision a practical reality. Earnestly do I beg you to assist in preparing the ground for the foundations of this great building by passing the resolution unanimously.

#### MISS LLOYD (NEW ZEALAND).

I am much pleased to-day to be able to second this resolution which has been put before you on behalf of the Canterbury Women's Institute of New Zealand. I know how warmly they have at heart this question of internationalism. The idea of real internationalism is one that must necessarily be of slow growth, but may we not look at the world agony through which we are passing as the birth throes of this great idea? We cannot look forward into the future and not realise the lesson that this war teaches us. Militarists and pacifists are agreed about that. But the lesson is this: there is no half-way house between the extreme state of militarism—the state of military preparedness such as we have seen exemplified in Germany—and a definite step in the direction of international agreement, or arbitration. We must choose between the ARMED STATES OF EUROPE and the UNITED STATES OF EUROPE. We cannot face both ways. If we heap up our armaments, increase our standing army by conscription, and strengthen our navy, on the old false basis of the balance of European power, we must of necessity work up the spirit of fear and suspicion, out of which war must inevitably come in another few years. A well-known English general, who came out to New Zealand a few years ago to inspect the forces there, let us into the secret when he explained in his report that the public must be kept sympathetic and eager over the Defence Force, so that they will be ready to find the money required for its efficiency. This was done in combination with other means by heating the prejudice of the New Zealand people against a neighbouring nation. There can be no appeal to reason and justice in our dealings with other nations, much less of wide generosity and charity, whilst this friction has to be constantly kept up by those who have to find the money and men for an enormous army, and this, we must understand, is going on in every country. There is nothing that has struck me so much in reading extracts from the papers of different countries as the fact that every country believes it is fighting a defensive war, a war for

its very existence as a nation. Are we for ever to go on suffering under this vast and tragic illusion? May it not be for us women, whose sacred mission, as we have been reminded this afternoon, is the guardianship of life, to celebrate what we hope is going to be their entrance into political life by a great united effort to redeem the world from this great tyranny of destruction, to preach a deliverance to the people, to undo the heavy burdens and let the oppressed go free, to raise up the foundations of many generations, and to restore paths to dwell in? Then, with this vision of international agreement and co-operation, we must set ourselves to serious thinking and study of the question, coming to it with fresh minds, unhampered by old traditions, illusions and ideals, with a determined and earnest effort that the new ideal shall become a reality. I have much pleasure in seconding the resolution, and I hope it will meet with the universal support of the meeting. (Applause).

#### MISS MACMILLAN.

I propose to substitute the word "council" for the word "Parliament."

Accepted by Mrs. Bracher and Miss Lloyd.

#### MISS RUTTER (NEW ZEALAND).

In considering this resolution which has been brought before us with regard to an International Parliament, I want to take our thoughts back to 250 years ago, when a scheme of the same sort was proposed by William Penn, who wrote an essay, "The Present and Future Peace of Europe." He was laughed at at the time as an unpractical idealist and fanatic, but since then our thoughts have been focusing more and more on the necessity for us to do away with those ideas which for the 250 years since he wrote that essay have still been deluging the world with blood. We must determine to put an end to the war machinery. One thing I think we must remember is that it is a thing that will have to be worked for. The best brains of our land, and not only of our land but all other lands, have been devoted towards perfecting the war machinery. Now, we want to see to it that we have our money and best brains expended in finding out some means of doing away with that which has caused so much misery. The chief burden of war falls upon women. We must do away with war, and substitute something better. We must work on sure foundations, and rebuild a city which is better than anything else that has been before. We must have a kindly feeling, and magnanimity, and then if we can get this Parliament of nations, this international Parliament to settle all disputes, we shall feel that we have helped to bring in the era of the Prince of Peace. (Applause.)

Amendment suggested to insert after "Council" the words "consisting of equal numbers of men and women," proposed by Mrs. Wilkinson (Workers' Suffrage Federation).

Seconded by Miss Hodge.

Amendment carried, and accepted by proposer and seconder of the resolution.

Resolution in amended form:—

"That this Conference is of opinion that in order to prevent future wars, an International Council, consisting of equal numbers of men and women, should be established to regulate all disputes between nations by means of Reason instead of Force."

Carried with one dissentient.

## THURSDAY, JULY 6th.

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### Morning Session, 10 a.m.—1 p.m.

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*SUBJECT: Sex Morality and Sex Education.*

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CHAIR: MISS EVELYN SHARP, EDITOR "VOTES FOR WOMEN."

We have met here this morning to discuss what is perhaps, apart from the basic reason of abstract justice, the most vital reason which underlies the demand of women for complete political equality with men. We are going to discuss the question of venereal disease, which knows no race, no nationality and no class, and therefore is essentially a question which may be discussed in an Imperial Conference like this one, because the delegates from Overseas will probably be able to help us very much out of their experience in these matters, and we, perhaps, on our part may be able to give them something from our experience that may be helpful to them when they go back to their own countries.

Now, we have these three Resolutions, and we have, roughly speaking, three hours to deal with these Resolutions, so that we will give an hour to each one. The first resolution is:—

"That in the opinion of this Conference compulsory measures of legislation dealing with Venereal Disease aggravate rather than lessen the evil to be combated."

This Resolution will be moved by Miss Alison Neilans, whose name is probably known to a good many of you as the Editor of "The Shield," and Assistant Secretary of the Association of Moral and Social Hygiene, which is the outcome of the old Abolitionist Society founded by Mrs. Josephine Butler.

MISS ALISON NEILANS.

I have great pleasure in moving this Resolution. Miss Sharp, in her opening address, recalled to mind Mrs. Josephine Butler, and that the society which I represent to-day is the direct outcome of her work. For 47 years this society has studied the problems of prostitution and venereal disease, and, as you know, Mrs. Butler and her colleagues were responsible for the abolition of the Contagious Diseases Acts in this country, and therefore it is with particular pleasure that I speak to this Resolution. The whole of the work of this Association, the whole of the 47 years of investigation, not only in Great Britain, but in other parts of the world, has, in my opinion, completely proved the fact that you cannot deal with social problems arising out of prostitution, such as the problem of venereal disease, merely by drastic legislation. As a matter of fact, one may say that you cannot deal by compulsory measures with a problem which is so deeply rooted in human nature; other measures must be used.

The whole world is now awakening to the enormous dangers which threaten the race, owing to venereal disease, and every country is trying to deal with it in various ways. I will just mention roughly what was done in this country, and what is

being done to-day. You know that in 1866 the Contagious Diseases Acts were introduced into Great Britain in fourteen garrison towns, in order to protect the health of the troops. I do not want to go into these Acts now, but the central point of them was that women known to the police as prostitutes should be compulsorily examined periodically, and then given a certificate to say they were fit to go on with their work, in order that the men who consorted with them should be protected from venereal disease. These Acts were swept away in 1886, chiefly as a result of Mrs. Butler's campaign, and to-day we know that in so doing we were not only morally right, but scientifically justified. At the time of the agitation against the Acts most of the medical profession, with a few honourable exceptions, were entirely against their abolition, and most people thought it was done in answer to Puritanical clamour. The Report of our own Royal Commission, which was issued this spring, showed, however, that not only were the principles of the Contagious Diseases Acts wrong from a moral point of view, but wrong scientifically. The Royal Commission went out of its way to point out that no benefit would accrue from a re-enactment of the Contagious Diseases Acts in this country, and, as a matter of fact, the health of the Army and Navy has improved since the abolition of these Acts. (Applause.)

What we are more interested in to-day is the question from the Overseas point of view. Australia has had to face this problem. I am sorry to say that in Queensland, even under woman suffrage, they have re-enacted a measure similar to the Contagious Diseases Act. It was introduced under the disguise of a health measure, and a great number of the electorate did not know what that health measure contained at all, as in England some people thought it was for dealing with diseases of cattle, such as foot-and-mouth disease; so in Queensland they have passed the Contagious Diseases Acts under the euphemistic title of a Health Act. One might really call it an Act for the propagation of disease. In Western Australia, too, they have just passed a Health Act on better lines than the Contagious Diseases Acts, but which is nevertheless not satisfactory.

Before I go into that I would like to say there are three ways in which you may deal with venereal disease. You may have legislation on the lines of the Contagious Diseases Acts, which, apart from moral considerations, is a great injustice to women and quite useless from a medical point of view. Then you can have measures dealing equally on paper with both sexes, but which give power to the authorities to detain compulsorily people suffering from venereal disease, and to compel the notification of such people to the authorities. This is a better measure than the Contagious Diseases Acts, because in theory it applies to both sexes. Then there is a third system, and that is the system that I advocate to-day, namely, the provision of free efficient treatment for everybody who needs it without any compulsion, and without any disgrace or publicity.

We need not consider the Contagious Diseases Acts, but I want to deal with the respective merits of the other two systems. In all proposals that deal with venereal disease from a compulsory point of view there are two main points, and a great number of people to-day who have no sympathy with Contagious Diseases Acts are advocating these measures. They are that you compel people to notify venereal disease to their local authorities; and that you may have the power, for instance, in the Poor Law infirmaries compulsorily to detain any person who applies for relief and is found to be suffering from venereal disease. On the face of it that seems quite right. We notify measles. Why not venereal disease? Well, if venereal disease were measles or small-pox there would be no earthly reason why it should not be notified. But the reason is apparent when one considers what venereal disease really is. It does not necessarily follow that



the person who has got it has lived a very immoral life or has got it through any fault of his or her own. There is a great amount of innocent venereal disease in the world, and, personally, I believe the sanest attitude for everyone to take would be to assume that all people have contracted it innocently. (Applause.)

Now, the Royal Commission has pointed out that syphilis and gonorrhœa are very easily cured in the first few weeks after they have been contracted. Put under treatment immediately, there is every hope of either of these diseases being cured within a reasonable time, but when these diseases have gone on for a good many years, and have got thoroughly into the blood, then they are very difficult indeed to cure. What is the effect of compulsory notification going to be if you compel men or women, when they go to their doctor and that doctor diagnoses them as suffering from venereal disease—to be immediately notified as venereal patients to the local authorities, who will have to take steps to segregate them and prevent them from infecting others? Men or women will not go to a doctor until they are so ill that they can no longer hide their symptoms, and that is a long time in the case of venereal disease, and in that first period they are more infectious than at any other time, and more easily cured than at any other time, yet at that time they are driven away from treatment because of the publicity involved.

With regard to compulsory detention. The Royal Commission has decided to recommend that neither prisoners nor men in the Army or Navy shall be detained after service has expired, but shall be recommended to put themselves under free treatment. They have made an exception in one class of people, and that is patients who come under Poor Law Authorities. These they propose to detain by compulsion. Now, generally speaking, there is no accommodation worth mentioning in the country for the treatment of venereal disease, except in the Poor Law Unions, in the lock wards of the workhouses, and the consequence is that not only do some of the most wretched of the street women drift into lock wards, but a great number of cases of married women innocently infected. The suggestion is that the Guardians shall have the power compulsorily to detain those people when they want to go out, if suffering from venereal disease. The same argument applies exactly to this as applies to compulsory notification. If a girl knows, or a married woman knows, that when she seeks admission or shelter in the Poor Law Union she will be detained against her will, she will keep out of it, only giving in when she is so bad she cannot go on.

Now, the whole object of our protest against these compulsory measures is this. You do not want to punish the unhappy men or women who are suffering from these diseases. One may be shocked morally at the cause of so much of it, but we have to remember that disease is not a crime, and I might remind you here that Christ did not ask people how they got their diseases. He helped and forgave them first, and it was not until after having done so He said, "Go, and sin no more." It is that attitude we ought to take up. The object of our interest in venereal disease is this, we want to prevent the spread of it throughout the community, and we want to bring people under the very best treatment at the earliest possible moment, in order that they may cease to be a danger to others, and may recover their health and self-respect, too. Will you achieve that best by these compulsory measures which drive people away from treatment? Again, in the case of Poor Law patients, the most helpless and wretched class in the community, you will take away their liberty, and thereby infringe the whole principle of personal liberty, and for the one woman you will be able to detain you will deter twenty others from medical treatment—precisely the same result as with compulsory notification.

Now, on the contrary, I would suggest the scheme which our own Royal Commission has recommended, and which is what is

needed, with the exception of the suggestion to detain Poor Law patients. It provides for free, efficient treatment in every centre of the community without deterrent conditions; the Government has promised to provide 75 per cent. of the cost. It is up to the municipal voters to see that their local authority provides the other 25 per cent. It suggests the provision of clinics, without any compulsion whatever. When men and women know that at the first stages of their illness they can come to a night clinic, where perhaps even their names will not be taken, that they can come without any fear of compulsion or publicity—if necessary they can even go to the next town, under the Royal Commission arrangements that is provided for—many of them will be very glad to be treated. In this way we can hope to bring these diseases under the medical control that is necessary, and greatly reduce them.

There is another point, and that is directly you *compel* people to do anything you take away from them personal responsibility, and one of the great causes of these diseases is the lack of personal responsibility. (Applause.) All these measures, which are compulsory, which are unjust—all these things do not make a person more responsible; they lessen responsibility. What we have to do by education, and by the pressure of public opinion on the doctors, is to see that any man or woman who comes for treatment, once we have provided that treatment, shall be plainly told what is wrong; they ought to be given, as they are given in the Army to-day, printed cards telling them what they may and may not do. When the community has done everything it can for the individual, then the community has a right to expect good behaviour and moral self-respect from that individual. (Applause.) It is no good telling people to wash themselves unless you have laid on the water. (Applause.) It is no good telling people to be cured if there are no facilities for treating them efficiently and for getting them cured. I have pleasure in moving the resolution that compulsory measures aggravate rather than lessen the evils of venereal disease, for the reasons that I have indicated in my speech. (Applause.)

#### MRS. BEAMISH LANE (SOUTH AFRICA).

The previous speaker has dealt with this subject in such a very interesting and clear manner that there is not very much left for me to say, except that I am fully in accord with all the points made in her speech. We are all agreed that this measure is most necessary for the moral welfare of the nation, and I do think it would be a splendid thing if we could get even more educational propaganda on the subject than we have at present. People are so ignorant, and very often become the victims of this disease through sheer lack of knowledge.

In South Africa, I am sorry to say, venereal disease is very prevalent among the white population, and we have an overwhelming native population. We have the Kaffir, who is more or less of a pure breed, and we have the coloured man of all degrees of colour, from chocolate up to lemon. Amongst these coloured races especially, and also the Kaffirs, this disease is very prevalent, and when you understand that these natives are our servants, and are in intimate connection with the women and children of the household, you will realise what a grave danger this constitutes. Also, these natives understand that this disease is a thing that must not be talked about. They try and hide it, and you generally only find it out by some terrible thing happening.

In South Africa, the Medical Commission published a very valuable report last year. The main points of their report were very much in accord with what Miss Neilans has told us this morning. They considered that there should be no compulsion, but that medical facilities should be given free to both men and women, and to the native as well as to the white population. It remains to be seen

whether the Government in South Africa will adopt these recommendations. There was an attempt to bring in a re-enactment of the Contagious Diseases Acts, and there the very same thing prevailed as in Australia, the Suffrage Societies of South Africa found it quite necessary to tell the people as emphatically as possible that the Contagious Diseases Acts did not refer to cattle. Everyone thought they did. In South Africa the Suffrage Societies have been very active and eager on this subject; they have done all that voteless women can do in forwarding protests and resolutions to the Government. We only hope that the South African Government will listen to them. I have very great pleasure in seconding this resolution.

#### MISS QUINLAN (VICTORIA, AUSTRALIA).

May I ask Mrs. Beamish Lane if she will tell us a little bit more with reference to the Kaffir as distinct from the coloured man in South Africa? I have been told that the Kaffir has special laws instituted by the head of his tribe, by which his health is protected. We would like to know if the Kaffir servant is less dangerous to the community than the coloured man. I understand you mean by the coloured man, not only the half-breed Kaffir but the Indian?

#### MRS. BEAMISH LANE (SOUTH AFRICA).

There are in South Africa the Kaffirs, who are indigenous to the soil, and the coolies, who have been imported from India, and then, mostly in the Cape, you have the half-breed from the white and the black, all shades of colour. The native is under the control of the head of his tribe, but the Government has taken away from the heads of the tribes nearly all power, and has put nothing in its place, so that the Kaffir is just as much a source of danger to the community as the others.

A member of the audience asked Miss Neilans if she had considered that in many Colonies all facilities had been given, both publicly and privately, and yet the disease had not been stamped out, and that is why some of the Colonies had adopted compulsory notification. It was found to be quite hopeless to expect the uneducated masses to report themselves, and to take advantage of any facilities given them. Miss Neilans said that in Perth, in Western Australia, there was a meeting of women protesting against the Bill, saying that voluntary treatment had not yet had a fair trial. Cases were taken at the public hospital, but only on payment.

Another member of the audience said: "I come from the National Council of Women, Western Australia. Does the speaker know that no payment can be made, all treatment is free?"

#### MISS NEILANS.

I should like to say that that Bill was only passed late in 1915, and I shall be much interested to see if any real decrease in venereal disease is due to compulsory notification in Western Australia. Of course, I would not for a moment put my opinion against a speaker from the country itself, but I have been dealing for the last three years entirely with statistics for venereal disease, and administrative measures taken with regard to it, and compulsory measures have never yet, in the opinion of my society, been advantageous. I should be very much surprised to find that compulsory notification has really diminished disease; when people are forced to notify, and therefore to more or less come into publicity, they won't do it.

Question: Are the proposed clinics to be attached to the existing hospitals or would they be entirely separate?

## MISS NEILANS.

It is suggested that there should be no kind of differentiation between the special clinics and ordinary clinics, because, of course, it is quite obvious that if it were called a venereal clinic, people would be afraid to be seen going into it. Where treatment is given in general hospitals it should be given without any obvious kind of name.

Question: In view of the secrecy that has always existed with regard to venereal disease, what measure is proposed for combating the evil if not compulsory notification?

## MISS NEILANS.

The recommendation of the Royal Commission, which I supported, is that free efficient treatment centres should be set up in every county, borough and town, in order that people may be able to get treatment. The point is, that compulsory notification is useless until you have facilities for treatment, and even then it will tend to drive people from treatment.

Question: Could the lecturer give us in a few words some idea of what it means to be detained in a lock ward of a Poor Law institution?

## MISS NEILANS.

The conditions of most of the present lock wards are absolutely abominable; some few are fairly good; generally speaking, they are more like mediæval prisons than anything else. In many cases both men and women are left there with absolutely nothing to do but stare at the walls. There is no occupation for the inmates, there are no visitors, and often very inferior medical treatment.

Question: In the case of country districts, where there are no hospitals near, would the Government grant for assistance be given to local doctors, or how would it be managed?

## MISS NEILANS.

I suppose there would be some provision, say, within twenty miles. It would be for the local authorities to make such provision for bringing patients in from outlying districts, the same as with fever and other infectious diseases.

## MISS MILTON (WOMEN'S LABOUR LEAGUE).

I would like to point out that the first thing of all is that doctors should be allowed freely to tell their patients what is the matter with them. (Applause.) Our speaker has not referred to that, but this is one of the great evils, the doctor is not compelled to say when a patient has this disease. Secondly, we have to educate public opinion that it should not be considered a stigma to have this disease.

## MISS MAUDE ROYDEN.

I want just to underline what Miss Neilans has said with this warning, that it is almost impossible to over-estimate the difficulty created at the present time by the sense of stigma inflicted by venereal disease. Those of us who have read the report of the Royal Commission will have noticed that columns are given to this one point—"What name will you give to the places where these diseases are treated?" Miss Neilans has referred to that briefly, but I want to rub it in because I know how honestly afraid people are of being known to suffer from venereal disease. And rightly so, because they believe it is practically always due to vicious living. (Applause.) When they realise the enormous amount of *innocent* suffering—(applause)—estimated by one member of the Commission as 50 per cent., when they realise that through contagion and through con-

genital influences, an enormous number of people are suffering horribly through no fault of their own, I firmly believe that notification will then be possible and advisable. But we cannot over-estimate at this moment the sense of stigma that attaches to this disease. The Commission asked many of the witnesses if they could suggest some name for a ward, which would not frighten the people away. It is very difficult to find a name which does not convey too clear a meaning, and that point was so important that the Commission has devoted a great deal of time to it. What must be altered is the state of public opinion, and until public opinion is altered, until people have sufficient knowledge to realise that suffering is very often completely innocent, I am one with Miss Neilans in thinking that compulsory notification will simply drive the disease underground. (Applause.)

### MRS. HERRING (NEW SOUTH WALES).

I come to this subject as rather an amateur, although I am very deeply interested in it, and I feel I ought to say something about it as a delegate from New South Wales. I want to read you what we did at the last General Conference of the Women's Liberal League in New South Wales (1916). The following resolutions were passed:—

1.—This Conference records its deep conviction of the essentially immoral and unjust principles underlying proposals for legislative enactments on the lines of the contagious Diseases Acts, which were abolished in England in the year 1885, and pledges itself to use every possible means to prevent the enactment of such legislation in the State of New South Wales, and also to assist the other States of the Commonwealth to resist any similar attempt within their borders."

2.—That in accordance with the resolution passed at the Congress of the International Women's Suffrage Alliance, Buda Pest, the Government be requested to institute an international inquiry into the extent and cause of commercialised vice, and that women be included in the Commission.

3.—That, following the example of Great Britain, a Royal Commission (including medical women) be appointed to inquire into the effect of contagious social diseases on the national health.

Personally, I am strongly convinced that the only way to put an end to this terrible disease is to fight it openly, abolish this dreadful secrecy, and get it looked upon as an ordinary illness. Mr. Flowers brought in a Bill about 1913 for compulsory treatment of consumption; complete secrecy was guaranteed. He expected by these measures to completely abolish the white plague in New South Wales. I believe he is already on the way to success. I cannot see why the same thing should not be done for venereal disease. Instead, there is a terrible medical etiquette which enjoins secrecy, and is carried to such an extent that a doctor may be treating husband and wife for the same disease and keep them in ignorance of the facts. A medical student told me she had seen many terrible cases where women had come to the Sydney General Hospital, and when questions were asked, it was often found they had become infected since marriage. We know that doctors may not even tell wives the name of their malady for fear of making trouble between husband and wife. It seems incredible, but I believe it is true. As illustrating many men's point of view, my husband wrote to me about a discussion he had with a man of long standing in the Imperial Army. Talking openly and sympathetically of the terrible ravages wrought in the Army by this scourge, he said that it was always the woman's fault. If a woman set herself to tempt a man it was impossible for him to resist. As my husband said, it seemed like making the

stationer who sold cards responsible for gambling. Venereal disease has, I believe, been responsible for so much illness and disease among the troops that many battalions have a rule that every soldier who has been on leave has to be medically treated on return as a preventative measure against his possible misdemeanour during his absence, and this measure has had a wonderful effect in reducing the number of cases. One of the speakers, I think from Western Australia, spoke of an effort to establish a Committee to enforce the law regarding brothels. I think this is a most necessary measure. These places exist in Sydney in spite of the law. There is another law which it is considered has done a great deal of good in Sydney, forbidding women to solicit. (Interjection: "Why not the men?") Of course, that should be done, too. If only the war were over I should like to say many things about the treatment of soldiers' wives by the Army. Not long ago I happened to be in Marseilles, and in a place like this, where the Army is well away from the firing line, wives have been strictly forbidden, but official panderers to vice have not only been allowed, but, I was told, encouraged. (Applause.)

#### MISS NEILANS.

I have only one or two points. A doctor is able to tell his patient what is wrong with him if he knows, but you must remember that all doctors at present are not expert in diagnosing venereal disease, and a great deal goes unnoticed. One of the notorious things under systems such as the Contagious Diseases Acts is that scores of prostitutes pass through the doctors' hands without disease being discovered. A doctor may tell his patient what he is suffering from, but he may not tell that man's wife, not for fear of coming between husband and wife, but because he becomes liable to an action for slander. Now, the Royal Commission has made a recommendation on this point, and that is, that discovery of venereal disease within a year of marriage shall be a ground for nullity of marriage; a marriage may be declared absolutely null and void.

With regard to the West Australian Bill, I have been looking through it again, and I do not think that the Australian Bill sets out to do quite what one questioner indicated. It is not a general compulsory measure, but it says that a person may notify to a Commissioner the name of a person whom he suspects to be diseased, but if he does so he must give a signed statement, in which he shall set forth his own full name and address, charging such and such a person with venereal disease. In such case the Commissioner may require such a suspected person to consult a medical practitioner, and to produce a medical certificate. If he or she refuses to do this, two medical officers are sent to examine him or her compulsorily. This section gives full power to reintroduce something very like the Contagious Diseases Acts if the authorities like to do it. As far as I can see there is no general notification in the Act. Every person going to a doctor is compelled to remain under treatment; the doctor is supposed to see to that. Time will show, but I cannot help believing that in view of other experiences that it will drive people to the sort of quacks you see up and down Tottenham Court Road, "specialists" for men and women. I had a long chat with one of these people, and he literally knew nothing whatever about the later effects of venereal diseases. (Applause.)

Resolution put to the meeting and carried with four dissentients.

A communication from the Northern Men's Federation for Woman Suffrage was then read by Miss Evelyn Sharp.

#### RESOLUTION.

"The Northern Men's Federation for Women's Suffrage, having just learnt of the passing of the Health Amending Act of Western Australia begs to record its horror that a young Free State

of the New World should adopt the worst traditions of corrupt civilisation and place its women, who have fallen through men's vicious systems, in a position of debasement which disgraces Christianity and our Common Humanity."

J. WILSON MCLAREN.

ALEXANDER ORR, Hon. Treasurer.

ALEX. STEVENSON, J.P., Councillor.

M. ARNCLIFFE SENNETT.

Councillor ALEX. BARRIE.

WILLIAM GRAHAM, Councillor.

HENRY DRUMMOND, Councillor.

Parish Councillor A. M. MILLAR.

MISS EVELYN SHARP.

I now call on Miss Maude Royden to propose the second resolution.

MISS MAUDE ROYDEN.

"That while recognising the value of the Report of the Royal Commission on Venereal Disease, this Conference deplores the absence of any allusion to the low political and economic status of women and the intimate connection of this fact with Prostitution."

In moving this resolution, I want to call your attention to the fact that the terms of reference of the Royal Commission do not allow it to deal with the causes of prostitution, but in spite of that fact the Royal Commission did take a certain amount of evidence on this subject, rather incidentally, and in its report it actually expresses an opinion on one or two points outside the terms of reference, and to our great satisfaction condemns the old system of regulation, a system on which those terms did not empower it to take evidence. It is therefore open to us to express a regret that the Commission, having thus gone a little outside its terms of reference, has not also expressed an opinion on the intimate connection with prostitution of the low political and economic status of women.

There is no subject on which more sweeping statements are made than the connection between economics and commercialised vice, and where some people speak as though no woman had ever gone wrong except under the fear of starvation, other people, and many of them experts, have, especially during the last two or three years, altogether deprecated the idea that there was any connection at all between economic conditions and prostitution. Between these two sweeping statements we stand to-day, and I want to call attention first of all to three or four outstanding and undeniable facts.

There are women, and a very large number of women, who for no consideration on earth would sell their bodies, and when people contrast the high price which is paid occasionally to-day for what you would call a "high class" prostitute with the ordinary living of a working woman, and say that this high price constitutes an ever-present temptation to the wife of the ordinary working man, I think, with your permission, that they are talking perfect nonsense. (Applause.) The temptation to sell herself for money, at whatever price, does not present itself to the respectable wife of an ordinary working man. People might say to you that if anyone offered me a thousand pounds to kill my mother it would be an ever-present temptation in my life. Well, it wouldn't. It would not tempt me at all; and into the lives of an enormous number of working women this other temptation does not enter at all.

Secondly, there are women who would go wrong in whatever circumstances they found themselves. There are women who appear, humanly speaking, to be naturally depraved, and the fall of

these women cannot justly be assigned to economic pressure, because it is not the fear of economic pressure which has sent them wrong.

Now the third fact. We are very apt to get confused between immorality and prostitution. There are probably just about an equal number, proportionately, of naturally moral and immoral women in all classes, except when we come to the submerged tenth, where, you may say, roughly speaking, that the children are brought up in such a way and are allowed to be born under such conditions, that the whole conception of morality has become almost impossible to them. When you get above that class, I think you will find moral and immoral women in just about the same proportion; but when you come to *prostitution*, you find that the very large majority come from the poorer classes. If prostitution has nothing to do with economic conditions, is not this fact rather remarkable? I want to make that point clear, because when you accept the fact, which is quite demonstrable and beyond contradiction, that the larger proportion of prostitutes comes from the poorer classes, you have either to choose between saying that there is something in the very nature of the working classes which makes them more immoral than the rich, or you must admit that it has been economic pressure in some form or other which accounts for the presence of so many women of the poorer classes in the ranks of prostitution. I believe it is true that the number of women who are driven on the streets from fear of starvation is exceedingly small, but while we are perpetually being lectured about our gross materialism and reminded that man does not live by bread alone, I would suggest to such arguers that a woman may be starving of everything that makes life worth living long before she goes on the streets. (Applause.) It is the grey and sordid monotony of the badly paid girl, engaged in some unskilled, uninteresting, monotonous work just at that age when romance and adventure and the first stirrings of sexual feeling make her demand from life colour and beauty and interest and love. That is often the real cause of the mischief. The fact that a girl will tell you when you ask her how she came first into this life, that she sold herself for a silk blouse, or because she wanted to go to the theatre, surely ought to convey to anyone with any human sympathy that she sold herself because she must have some colour in her life, and because she cannot endure the sordid monotony of it. And the more high-spirited, the more artistic, the more interesting she is, the less can she endure the absolutely monotonous greyneess of sordid toil. Starvation does not begin by going without food; it ends there. (Applause.) And there has gone before the starvation of every instinct of adventurous youth, every desire for a life which is more than mere existence. It shows an ignorance of human nature which is to me wholly incomprehensible to say that because a girl does not wait until she is literally starved for food, therefore economic pressure and low wages have nothing to do with her fall.

It is at least open to question, moreover, whether sheer starvation does not sometimes play a part in prostitution. It was said in the report of one of the American Vice Commissions that prostitution in certain big industrial German towns went up and down in proportion to the rise and fall of employment. Well, there may be some other explanation of that; but if there is I cannot guess what it is. There are, it seems, women who lead a straight life while they can get employment, and who revert to prostitution when they cannot get employment; and, whereas in the past a woman was, generally speaking, either a prostitute or she was not, the most marked characteristic of modern commercialised vice is the large number of women whom it is impossible to class, because they will practise prostitution when they are in difficulties, and go back to a straight life when they get a chance. There is nothing more remarkable than the growth in modern times of that class of commercialised vice. Prostitutes are not any longer a caste apart. There are num-



bers who drift from employment of a respectable kind to prostitution, and from prostitution back to work; and there is even a strong tendency on the part of such girls and women to drift up rather than down. Many of them pass only a few years living off and on the streets, and many of them afterwards marry or get into work on a firmer basis. Nevertheless, it is when the first barriers of self-respect are broken, down, when a girl in that case of need does sell herself that the downward path becomes easy; and the lowest class, the ultimate class of prostitutes, is largely recruited from these girls, who perhaps even for years were neither on the one side of the line nor the other, but always drifting in between. There, again, is a clear case of economic pressure recruiting the army of prostitution. And I would remind you that these young women are, generally speaking, the centres of venereal infection. The old idea that a woman becomes infectious after many years of prostitution, and that when she is diseased anybody can see it, is absolutely disproved. The first symptoms, the first stages of the disease, are actually the most infectious. It is not the woman who has lived for years on the streets, and whom everyone can see to be a prostitute, who is the worst danger to society; she becomes after many years frequently immune herself, and she becomes also actually less infectious to others. It is the young girl, whom hardly anybody would have the heart to register as a licensed prostitute, who is the most actively infectious. It is the girl who half her time is engaged in some other occupation, the girl not in the third or second, but in the first stage, of the disease, who is acutely and appallingly dangerous to others. Therefore, these women who drift between one camp and the other are really the most serious danger to society; they are the most difficult to find and are most infectious. That state of affairs is, as we have seen, largely caused by economic pressure.

I intend only for a moment to dwell on the political subjection of women. The whole attitude which is created in men by the lower position of women in economics and politics is a danger to women. It tends to make women less self-respecting, more ready to yield, and it makes men more willing to take advantage of them. I think one of the most enlightening things I ever read on this subject was an article which appeared some years ago in the "Common Cause" by Miss Lilian Waring, on the different sense of honour between the two sexes. Miss Waring pointed out that the common assumption that a subject class, or race, or sex creates for itself a lower standard of honour is only half the truth. That lower standard of honour belongs to both the governors and the governed. Both alike have their standard vitiated. When men say women have "no sense of honour," women think of the men who ruin a girl and leave her to bear the whole burden of the consequences. Only 5 per cent. of the mothers of illegitimate children in this country before the war got any help from the fathers of these children. Yet men claim a higher sense of honour than women! My point is this, that you will have a low standard of honour on both sides *where you have a servile class in the community*. Therefore, whatever lowers the status of women, economically and politically, will inevitably corrupt public morals and will create a vicious standard of "honour." I hold that the economic and political subjection of women is profoundly and intimately connected with the whole question of prostitution, and it is with very great pleasure that I move this resolution. (Applause.)

#### MRS. SADD BROWN (UNITED SUFFRAGISTS).

I am much pleased to second this resolution. I did not expect to have to speak at all, and therefore I shall not keep you. I only wish to say that I quite agree with what Miss Royden has just said. In the work that I used to do as Poor Law Guardian, I was brought into contact with many prostitutes. I always realised that it was the economic position in which they were placed that forced them

into this life. They had no liking for it, and one knew that behind there was that fear which governs so many of us in different forms, which seemed to be impelling them on to this terrible career. I have pleasure in seconding the resolution. (Applause.)

Question: Could Miss Royden tell us whether all prostitutes necessarily develop venereal disease, or do they first become diseased through infected men?

#### MISS ROYDEN.

So far as I am able to get the latest medical opinion on the subject, they are always first infected by some man, and that infection does happen extraordinarily soon. The type of man who goes to a prostitute is very likely to have venereal disease, and over and over again in the evidence given before the Royal Commission it was stated that practically all prostitutes suffered from some form of venereal disease. One doctor said, "I should say that practically every prostitute, after a few months of life on the streets, has gonorrhœa, and that in a form which is almost impossible to cure."\* I do not think it would be too much to say that at some point in her career practically every woman who lives this life contracts venereal disease, but she contracts it from some man.

How, in the first instance, the disease came into the world science has not yet been able to say, but I have heard it suggested that the spirochæte of syphilis is present in all women, just as the diphtheria germ is present in all our throats, but it only becomes virulent in certain circumstances. According to this theory, every woman has the spirochæte, but it is only in promiscuous intercourse between one woman and many men that it becomes virulent and syphilis ensues. But this view is not at all widely held. The disease is of ancient origin, and how it first came we do not know; but at present medical opinion holds that it is communicated by contagion, and if a woman has it she must have caught it from somebody.

Question: Can Miss Royden tell us whether the lower animals have this disease?

#### MISS ROYDEN.

It is entirely a human disease. It must be remembered that there is nothing resembling prostitution among any animals but the human animal. And when people talk about it as the oldest profession in the world, and seem to suggest that it is a "natural" inheritance, it is worth while to point out that prostitution does not exist among animals nor in many savage tribes, but does exist in what we are pleased to call civilised communities.

Question: Is not the immoral element in prostitution itself a disease?

#### MISS ROYDEN.

I entirely agree. I think the question hardly comes into the resolution or really into the subject we are discussing, though it seems to me to go deeply into the spiritual and moral values of human nature; but I believe it to be true that where there is moral disease there will be a physical reaction.

#### MRS. DESPARD.

I suppose we all know that babes are actually born infected? Has Miss Royden ever had the opportunity of tracing any of these cases, and of ascertaining whether they can be completely cured, and what practically would be the effect in later years, whether it would lead them to immorality, and whether they would pass it on to their offspring? There can be no doubt it would lead to immorality if it could not be completely cured.

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\* See Cd. 8,190, p. 154, § 16,950.

## MISS ROYDEN.

The whole question of complete and perfect cure seems to be still very much in doubt. Some medical opinion is on the side of the possibility of a complete, entire and lasting cure, but the opinions on the subject given before the Royal Commission seem to me to leave the matter very doubtful. The extreme excitement that was aroused by the discovery of salvarsan caused people to imagine that syphilis was perfectly and immediately curable by that. Salvarsan is a very important discovery, but the question of complete and final cure seems still extraordinarily difficult to solve. There was one instance quoted of a man who had had syphilis 25 years ago, and at the end of 25 years his wife was found to be suffering from the effects of infection.\* The man believed himself to be perfectly free, and so did all the doctors, but it certainly is exceedingly difficult to be quite certain.

With regard to children, it really is very largely a question of how early the condition is known, and a great deal can be done if the condition of the pregnant mother is known sufficiently early. That emphasises the great importance of the point made by one or two of the speakers, that the doctor ought to be at liberty to tell the wife what is the matter with her, because otherwise she may bear one syphilitic child after another. If she is fortunate (and I say that advisedly), they are born dead; but sometimes they are born alive, to die in infancy or struggle into a stunted, maimed, diseased maturity that is worse than death. They develop mental and moral aberrations, mental deficiency, and, what we call rather vaguely, "moral deficiency"; they are very often deaf, still more frequently blind, and these defects are incurable. And many of those children who fall into the category of the mentally deficient are appallingly fertile. A mentally deficient girl who is at the mercy of any vicious man may have a child every year, all of whom are tainted with syphilis. I wish I had the figures here of some of the enormous families which started with a mentally deficient parent, and have cost the State thousands of pounds.

Question: Does not Miss Royden think that supporting that theory which is held by some that the spirochaete is present in all women would be dangerous for fear that this would increase the almost universal habit of blaming the woman?

## MISS ROYDEN.

Well, I am afraid I may be in the minority, but I always think if a thing is true one must face it. I am absolutely certain that evasion of the truth will always result in disaster. Personally, so far as this theory goes, I believe that it is not true. Only about a fortnight ago I questioned a doctor who has given a great deal of time to the study of these diseases, and is at present on the Committee of the National Council for Combating Venereal Disease, and he said, "We are completely in the dark as to how venereal disease first occurs in the individual, and how it came into the world, but we are practically one in believing that now it is always passed on by contagion. If you could put a stop to prostitution you would automatically stamp out venereal disease."

Question: Am I right in thinking that those doctors who hold that the germ is latent in woman also hold that it is latent in the man, and that he will get the disease also in contact with the woman as the woman with the man?

## MISS ROYDEN.

No; they hold it is only present in the woman, and their point is this: that venereal disease does not arise, so far as can be ascer-

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\* See Cd. 8,190, p. 38, § 13.555.

tained, from the intercourse of one man with one woman, nor from the intercourse of one man with many women; it does not come from any excess committed in marriage; other ills come from that, but not venereal disease. Venereal disease comes when one woman associates with many men, and that is, of course, prostitution.

May I appeal to your scientific sense—(applause)—not to talk as if having a microbe in you were a moral sin? We are all full of microbes, and a person no more has diphtheria because he has a diphtheretic germ in the throat than (if this theory were correct) a woman would have syphilis because she had the spirochæte. But, as I say, the theory, though it has been put forward, is not accepted by the medical profession.

MRS. SETON TEEDIMAN (DIVORCE LAW REFORM UNION).

I am sorry that this meeting has not concentrated more on the economic position of women with regard to this question. The most important point of Miss Royden's speech was the portion where she dealt with the working women of Germany. I should like to say here that that was so important because it ought to have impressed upon us the failure, the absolute failure, of the Contagious Diseases Acts as applied to Germany. Miss Royden has pointed out that where work went up and down in certain German industrial towns, there you had a great deal of prostitution. Seven years ago my son returned from Germany, after spending some years in a university and in minor academies, and the first thing he said to me was: "Mother, for all you are worth fight every attempt to register prostitutes in England, for this reason, it is of no use. I have seen that in Germany. The manhood of Germany is rotting, and rotting fast, both through its registered prostitutes and through its underpaid working women. All the servants of restaurants and boarding-houses, all workers in every department of life in Germany are so underpaid," that, just as Miss Royden pointed out, "it is almost impossible to get any kind of joy or sufficiency of necessities unless they live this life. And it is well known that they do live this life. I do hope that it will never again happen in England, that is, as I have seen it in Germany." I did hope that the meeting would have centred on higher pay for women's work, in order that women should not be compelled to augment their wages by this means, which they undoubtedly are. It is said also in France that the *minidette* class is the grave danger; it is the underpaid woman worker that we have to guard and watch. (Applause.)

MISS CHRYSTAL MACMILLAN.

I agree most emphatically with Miss Royden when she suggests that we cannot argue that anyone may be higher or lower morally because of the presence or absence of any microbe. I think we cannot sufficiently emphasise that point of view, but in considering scientifically the causes of this disease, I think there is one point that is overlooked. In those countries where polygamy is practised, where one man has many wives, these wives are kept for himself alone, but where one woman has contact in prostitution with many men, these men are not kept to the woman alone. I think this fact is very often overlooked. (Applause.)

MISS ROYDEN.

Miss Neilans has just pointed out to me a paragraph in the Report, which answers, so far as the knowledge of the Commissioners goes, Mrs. Despard's question. "The evidence we have received shows conclusively that the disastrous effects of congenital syphilis can be obviated by efficient treatment of the parents or the children or both."

I want, in summing up, not to repeat anything that I have said, but merely to urge that when our whole attitude is one of persistent

demand both for knowledge for ourselves and the spread of knowledge in the community, for us at the same time to deprecate any piece of knowledge or piece of research or scientific theory or discussion is to give away the whole ground on which we stand. (Applause.) If we are to have knowledge we must be ready both to hear it and to communicate it, and we must not say beforehand that if it looks disagreeable we will not hear it.

Now, with regard to the whole subject of my resolution, I want to recall just one weighty statement in support of my contention. My point has been throughout that it is the inferior position of women economically and politically which is at the very heart of what we call the social evil. Perhaps the greatest, or certainly one of the greatest, authorities in the world, gave evidence on this subject before the Royal Commission. That was Dr. Blaschko, and almost the last thing he said was: "I really do not hope anything for the grown-up man and woman; we must begin with the children, and introduce into the boys a *greater respect for woman*."\* (Applause.)

Resolution put to the meeting and carried unanimously.

#### MR. MAURICE GREGORY (SECRETARY, FRIENDS' ASSOCIATION FOR THE PROMOTION OF MORAL PURITY).

I have pleasure in moving the third resolution:—

"That this Conference recommends all Women's Organisations to insist that

(a) The whole question of Venereal Disease, and

(b) Inequalities of Administration of Law in cases of sexual crime be thoroughly ventilated at public meetings and in the Press."

Mr. Maurice Gregory spoke shortly to the (a) clause of this resolution, and praising the system of the lock hospitals in London, spoke enthusiastically of the kindness of the treatment shown to the patients in those institutions.

The chair was then taken temporarily by Miss Newcomb to enable Miss Evelyn Sharp to speak to the (b) clause in the resolution.

#### MISS EVELYN SHARP.

In dealing with the inequalities of administration of the law with regard to sexual crime, I am going to keep to the offences against children, which form the larger section of that crime. I do not know whether people realise the increase in these terrible crimes which have taken place in recent years. Part of the increase may be due to the greater opportunities of people for finding out these cases and prosecuting them, but there is no doubt that they have immensely increased. I do not know if you saw a letter of Canon Newbolt's in the "Sunday Times," in which he appealed for money for two rescue homes. He talked about the immense increase in these crimes, and said there was a great increase among little children of an age which varies from five to fifteen. "The statistics received from various rescue workers are such as would stagger those who do not know the urgency of the matter." The Bishop of London said very much the same thing in a speech when he introduced his Bill to raise the age of consent in April, 1914. Again, in the Report for 1914-15 of the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, which is one association for bringing these cases to light, there were 834 cases in that society alone, and out of these a very small proportion of convictions was secured. So much for the increase, which, by the way, has become so great that there is now a Committee for the Prevention of Crimes against Children which, so far, has been occupied in obtaining facts, but

\*Quoted from memory. See Cd. 8,190, p. 107, § 15,451.

has been much hampered by the outbreak of war. The Committee arose out of a little conference on the subject before the war, of which, I think, the Bishop of Ely was chairman.

There are a great many causes for these crimes, but I still think that even in this case the basic reason is the subjection of women, because of the immense number of crimes against little girls. To show that the subjection of women is one cause, take the case which Mr. Justice Darling had before him at the Surrey Assizes of a man of 40 who pleaded guilty to a criminal assault on four young boys. That is a terrible thing, of course, but his lordship referred to the prisoner's criminal mania, his duty to protect society from such acts, and passed a sentence of penal servitude for life. That is what he would have the power to do in the case of assaults on little girls, but I do not think it has ever been done in this country. I know that in Australia they have passed the death sentence, but here I do not think the maximum sentence is ever passed. It shows that when this view is taken, that it is much more serious to commit crime against little boys than against little girls, you come again to that root cause, the subjection of women. I know assaults upon boys are classified as "unnatural" crime. But no woman or decent man can believe it is a "natural" crime to assault baby girls. That argument simply falls to the ground where children are concerned, whatever you may think about it in adults. I maintain that if it is possible to give the life sentence of penal servitude to the person who corrupts boys, it ought to be possible to give it in the case of the corruption of little girls. I need not tell you that I am not in favour of long sentences for anything; I think they breed criminals, but if you take the standard of things as they are at present, if you are going to send anybody to prison, it should be these men who prey upon little girls and babies. What I liked about this cutting in "The Sunday Times" was that there seemed to be some kind of attempt to treat this man as a maniac and exercise some kind of supervision over him. That is the only possible way of guarding the children against these crimes. Needless to say, I do not think it ought to be the prison doctor who has a final voice in the matter. We women know enough about prison doctors!

Another reason, which will, of course, be dealt with this afternoon, is the crying want of sex education. The close relation is shown in that terrible revelation (not a revelation to people who have studied these crimes) in the Royal Commission Report, where the very prevalent superstition among uneducated people is mentioned that a man can be cured of these diseases by intercourse with a little girl. That is a widespread superstition, which seems almost incredible, but does account for a great many of these cases.

I think the main cause is the leniency of the courts where these cases are concerned. (Applause.) In many ways you see it, whether it is a judge or magistrate who is ready and eager to seize upon an excuse for letting off the man. You will find, for instance, that if a man pleads ignorance that the girl was under sixteen, he gets off. There have been some terrible cases in which it is impossible to believe that he did not know, and yet he has got off. That defence is far too readily accepted by judges and magistrates. At the Stafford Assizes in February a young man who kept a girl, aged 15, out all night, was acquitted, because he said he thought she was 17, and the word of both mother and sister, who said they had told him her real age, was rejected. And where the judge is sometimes on the right side, the jury is opposed to it. That happened in Mr. Justice Ridley's court at the Exeter Assizes in January. A man who was charged with an offence against a little girl of 14 was acquitted on this plea, although he admitted he had known the girl two years, and she had only left school five months, and there was the evidence of a Salvation Army officer against him. On that point Mr. Justice Ridley summed up against the prisoner, and yet the jury acquitted

him. It is not necessarily the law that is at fault always; sometimes it is the interpretation of it. For instance, at the Hereford Quarter Sessions last October, Mr. Justice Arthur Gwynn had before him a man of 52 charged with indecently assaulting a girl of 13. The defence was that the girl was a consenting party, and the judge said it was a very proper one in law. So the man only got six months' hard labour when he could have got up to two years.

Then there is the excuse of the youth of the offender. There, of course, I have something to say. I think we must distinguish in these cases between the moral lunatic and the ignorant boy of 15 and 16, having intercourse with an ignorant girl of the same age. I do not want to be hard, because we must take all sorts of things into consideration, but if it is possible to send boys of 16 and 18 for three years to a Borstal Institution because they have committed some petty theft, we ought to be able to do the same thing in the interests of society in the case of boys who have assaulted little girls. And there are many such cases. There is the case of a fellow of 18 who assaulted a girl in a cinema down at Devonport. A great deal of anger and indignation was aroused when he was fined £1, and not even given a sentence of imprisonment at all. The same week there was a carpenter who was charged at the Middlesex Sessions with stealing £3 9s. from a shop, for which he received three years' detention in a Borstal Institution.

There are instances, again, in which the case is not sent for trial because the longer sentences can only be given at Quarter Sessions or Assizes. If they are dealt with summarily in the police court the charge has to be reduced to one of common assault, the maximum sentence for which is six months' hard labour. But we must also remember that one reason for dealing summarily with these cases is that they are so terrible that the memory must not be kept in the child's mind longer than is absolutely necessary. The difficulty therefore of insisting upon a case being tried by jury is that the whole story has to be revived in the child's mind for the evidence that is wanted. That is one reason why parents and guardians will often consent to its being dealt with at once. (It is also thought that magistrates, on the whole, are more inclined to deal severely than juries. That would not be the case if juries were composed partly of women.) Take the following case: A father who has assaulted his little baby of two years and eight months, a case which created the utmost indignation at Devonport, was not sent for trial, and it could not have been that they were studying the child, because, in any case, the evidence of the baby could not be taken. He got three months' imprisonment for that, and this was only in May of this year. This is a terrible case, because I hear that that baby is still terribly ill; it is not known if it will recover. The danger is that that man will soon be out again, free to prey upon little girls. It is not vengeance we want, but safety for the community.

Cases of small theft are sent for trial because that enables the sentence to be longer. There was one on June 27th before Mr. Denman at the Marlborough Street Police Court of a girl stealing 30s. from a handbag. There was nothing against her character, the evidence was doubtful, and when she was searched the money was not found on her, yet this case must go for trial. So you see how unequal these things are, all based upon the idea that it does not matter what happens to little girls and babies, but it does matter what happens to property. This injustice is very largely based upon the acceptance of this principle.

I think the point of the whole thing is that these things will not be improved by merely clamouring for longer sentences, by insisting that the full penalty of the law is to be put into effect by these people; the subject will only be properly taken up when women are on the bench, women in court, women on juries; then the seriousness of the question will be seen. I do not think the difficulty

will be adequately dealt with until there are special courts. There is a Children's Court sitting now regularly. Why not a special court to deal with these cases, so that the little witnesses would not be kept waiting for months; and then it would be possible for these questions to be dealt with more intelligently and more justly than they are at present? (Applause.)

The chair was then resumed by Miss Sharp.

Question: Are there any Government Official Returns as to the number of cases which come to the knowledge of the police without necessarily having been brought into court?

MISS SHARP.

If you get the Annual Report of the Commissioner of Police you will find them there.

Question: I should like to ask Miss Sharp if she does not think it would be best to stop this conspiracy of silence, this mock modesty?

MISS SHARP.

I agree. We Suffragists have broken that down, and I do think it should be talked about. I am surprised wherever I go at the appalling ignorance; I find people won't believe about these crimes against children. One has to produce reports and figures and things of that kind, and they don't even know the number of homes there are for those they dare to call "fallen children."

MISS ROYDEN.

I should like to ask whether there are homes for what are called morally deficient children. I was told the other day by somebody who had been employed in such a home that the Government runs four homes for morally deficient children. I was much interested, because I did not realise that the Government had arrived at such a point in which it could distinguish between moral and physical deficiency. These children were morally deficient because they had been violated by some man, even a relative of the children. "In that case," I said, "there are no morally deficient little boys." "Oh, no," she said. It seems to me incredible!

MISS SHARP.

I know the Home Office does have homes, but I did not know they called them by that name. Perhaps someone in the audience knows.

A Member of the Audience: I can partially answer. Just before the war a large building was erected by the Government at Tooting. It is now used and called the Springfield War Hospital, in which between 200 and 300 mental cases are taken over. If the war had not taken place they were proposing to put several hundreds of children there.

Question: Whether the law of custom could not in some way be used as a remedy pending our fuller enfranchisement. The law of custom is stronger than the law of the land, and those morally deficient men who commit these crimes are not looked upon by the law of custom as the woman who commits a crime is looked upon.

MISS SHARP.

Yes, I am afraid the public attitude has tended to create that law of custom in the past, for really these cases have not been known, and it is not only women who have been ignorant of the prevalence of these crimes against children. Therefore, I think that the way to create that law of custom is, as our resolution demands, that the whole question be thoroughly ventilated in the Press and at public



meetings. Our difficulty is, that the Press, with a few exceptions, won't ventilate these crimes, though it is improving, and especially in the provinces.

#### MISS NEILANS.

Don't you think that the girls, who are the partners in these offences, ought to be sent to a Borstal Institution? I do not mean for punishment, but for instruction, and also women who seduce young boys ought to be treated on the same lines. I do not think that as Suffragists we ought to limit ourselves to one side of the question.

#### MISS SHARP.

Agreed. Boys need to be protected as much as girls. I slightly touched upon that when I said I wanted to distinguish between moral lunatics and boys who drift into immorality, but my point about Borstal Institutions was made to meet the question of the comparison made between theft and morals.

#### MR. MAURICE GREGORY.

I support what we have heard about the importance of mixed juries. I urged that everywhere I went in Australia, and I should like to give a precedent for it. That is the great success of mixed juries introduced first by William Penn, the founder of Pennsylvania, for troubles between white men and the Indians. Half the jury were white men and half Indians, and this introduced an element of justice originally unknown. As the speaker just now said, with women on the juries and bench and also as lawyers, and the establishment of special courts for this kind of thing, we shall see a great education of the public mind, and a great extension of justice in these cases, where there has hitherto been most abominable and gross injustice.

Question: Whether there is any possibility of a wife getting released from such a man convicted of these crimes.

#### MRS. BRACHER (NEW ZEALAND).

The Divorce Law in New Zealand has been reformed for some years, and there are certain conditional causes where a wife can get divorce from her husband, but I do not think that this one question of sexual crime is considered a cause for divorce there; they have not gone so far as that.

#### MISS MACMILLAN.

I should say that, for instance, in Scotland or one of the Colonies where adultery was a cause for divorce, sexual crime would be considered a cause.

#### MR. FLEWKER (PERSONAL RIGHTS ASSOCIATION).

I should like to say that the inequality in the administration of the law is very obvious to anyone who frequents police courts and assizes; most terrible cases of injustice are met with. We know the old saying, "One law for the rich and another for the poor," and I say this earnestly and with truth, "There is one law for the man and another for the woman." I could tell of cases that have come under my notice of the most appalling character, and I think it is up to you ladies, when you get the vote, to see to it that these inequalities are rectified. You have many excellent journals which circulate far and wide—see that these cases are ventilated, call serious attention to them.

MISS SYLVIA PANKHURST (HON. SECRETARY, WORKERS'  
SUFFRAGE FEDERATION).

I feel very keenly that our ambition should be not to punish, but to cure sexual crimes. Associated with the Women's Reformatory Prison of New York is a laboratory for research, and its staff includes a pathologist and a mental scientist. In order that the *causes* of the crimes may be discovered, the patients (for the prisoners are regarded as patients) are studied from the physical, the mental and the sociological standpoint, and the last is of tremendous importance.

People talk about those who are vicious and morally deficient. I do not believe in either of those things. I believe that all wrongdoing is a form of disease. Crime and unnatural conduct are at present outside the line of medical research, but some day a cure will be found for these things, and it seems to me that we have no right to keep people in prison without trying to discover the cause of what they have done, and to find out a means of curing them. In our prisons to-day people are locked up by themselves in a kind of box. If a person is so grievously afflicted as to commit crimes such as that of indecent assault on little children, it is quite useless to put that person in prison, merely to dwell with his or her own thoughts. We must try to find a cure. If you keep that person in prison ten years, he or she will be as likely to commit that crime again. It is our duty to find some way to remove the cause of what has happened. It may be that in some cases it will be found necessary to sterilise the patient, but that is a clumsy and horrible expedient. We ought to try every other before we resort to that. We must study the trouble from the scientific point of view. But it is quite impossible to expect warders and prison officials to undertake this. We must dismiss from our minds the idea that this is a criminal question; it is a medical one. I am perfectly certain that unless the place of detention is provided with a laboratory and a research department staffed by scientists the cure for unnatural crime will not be found, and it is quite certain that we shall have to work on scientific lines if we want to stamp it out from our civilisation. (Applause.)

Resolution put to the meeting and carried unanimously.

## Afternoon Session, 2.30 p.m.—4.30 p.m.

*SUBJECT* : Sex Morality and Sex Education.

Chair : MRS. HERRING (N.S.W., AUSTRALIA).

This morning we were discussing remedial legislation regarding venereal disease; this afternoon we shall be looking into the future, when we hope to prevent the occurrence of such diseases by better education and care of the young. The resolution before the meeting this afternoon is:—

“ That this Conference protests against the persistent ignoring of questions of sex in the moral and intellectual education of the young, and calls on all women's organisations to promote confidential and wholesome relations between parents and children and between teachers and children on this subject.”

I will now ask Miss Norah March, author of “ Towards Racial Health,” to address us.

MISS MARCH, B.Sc.

This is a very large subject to deal with, and I do not think that one can do justice to it in a very short time, so that I shall only outline to you, quite briefly, some facts in connection with the problem of sex education, and in the discussion which I understand is to follow, I hope you will raise any question that you would like to be dealt with rather more fully than I am able to do in this short speech.

This morning you had a discussion on the subject of venereal diseases, a subject which has greatly stimulated within recent years the question of ways and means of sex education. Now, although the information that has been made more public regarding these venereal diseases has so largely stimulated this movement for sex education, I do not feel that we should regard that knowledge as an inspiration for sex education. Undoubtedly, with adults whose characters are already formed, and whose way of living is already set along certain lines, it may be that the only restraint to which they yield is the restraint of fear; but when we are contemplating the question of the education of children, we ought to work with a higher aim in front of us, not merely inflicting a restraint through fear of disease, but inducing a restraint through a high conception of what an individual's duties and possibilities of conduct may be. If we try to inaugurate any custom in regard to sex education, and if we are inspired towards that custom merely by the hygienic ideal, I am afraid that our sex education will be very ineffective, ineffective because we had not the highest attitude towards the subject, and also ineffective because we ourselves should not be sufficiently inspired to do our best. Children whose lives are not yet set in any definite trend, whose characters are still plastic, whose minds also are plastic, offer a very different field for operations from that afforded by adults, and I feel that when we are considering the question of the instruction of children we have a possibility that is much more far-reaching. Will you let me make clear what I mean when I say this? To understand that point we must recognise the part that sex has to play and the power of sex in nature. The sex organs exercise two functions. The essential sex organs are of the type of organ which we call glands, and, being glands, they operate in the following

way: they supply certain substances which circulate in the body, thus influencing physical and mental development. In certain ways, all glands extract substances from the blood, and either discharge them from the body or put them to fresh uses in the body. The essential sex organs are glands in that sense; they have this very important function so far as the development of the individual is concerned, that they send into the blood-stream certain substances which stimulate the body to develop along certain lines, both physically and mentally. The secretion of the glands of the female organism differs from the secretion of the glands of the male organism, and the result of the specific activity of those glands is that the male body is different from the female body in various ways. This energising function which the racial glands perform is the important function of the racial organs so far as the health of the individual is concerned, and this function is operative probably from before birth, certainly after birth, and is operative during the whole of life. Hence from the point of view of personal health only, it is very urgent that the racial organs should be maintained in perfect health. The racial organs, of course, have their second function, which is connected with parenthood and with potential parenthood. They do not attain to this until the age of about fourteen in girls and about fifteen in boys. The years about this age are spoken of as the years of puberty; they are very critical years in the development of boys and girls. During these years girls and boys need special care and supervision to see that they pass from childhood to youthhood with perfect security.

So much for the physical side. Psychologically, too, the racial organs exercise a very important influence over development. Human nature is a bundle of instincts, and these instincts are innate cravings which we have inherited from our ancestors, through the whole process of evolution. The sex instinct is no exception to this rule. All organisms have periodical cravings, and in order to obtain the satisfaction of these cravings, they are impelled towards the performance of certain functions. The racial instinct, in common with all instincts, has its beginning of activity at birth; for all we know, it may be somewhat active before birth, but certainly from birth onwards. Civilisation, however, has imposed such a restrictive effect upon mankind that the instincts have no longer a direct expression after the years of childhood. A little child expresses its instincts in its own simple way; a little child who is angry shows its anger in a very primitive way, stamps its foot, cries and probably bites and scratches. That is the primitive type of anger expression, but the child soon learns that direct outlet of anger is not acceptable to a social or conventional code, and it learns to restrain itself, to control itself, and to show its feelings—it still has its feelings—in rather more restrained ways. Of course, there are grown-ups who lapse back to the primitive type, but that is retrogressive. So it is with the sex instinct. This sex instinct is active right from birth, but it is very early switched on to other fields of mental activity. I mean to say that the sex instinct itself in its direct expression is very often unacceptable to our ideas of what should be and what should not be, and consequently it practically never gets a direct outlet in childhood. The energy that is associated with this instinct is transferred through various complicated, unconscious, mental processes to other fields of mental activity, and thus reaches the consciousness through an indirect outlet. Mental evolution has apparently very largely proceeded along lines of transmutation of primitive instincts and their conversion into the more elaborate types of mental and emotional activity. Thus we must recognise that part of the problem of sex education is the directing of the mental and emotional habits, so that the racial instinct is preserved in perfect health. Through this process of transmutation the child comes to be, during early childhood, so far as sex consciousness is concerned, practically neutral, but as the

child reaches the years of seven, eight, nine and ten, we can identify the beginnings of a more obvious form of sex consciousness. We see the beginning of "sex hunger," as the psychologists call it, and at the age of puberty this consciousness or sex attraction and sex hunger becomes very prominent, normally remaining permanent during the whole of adolescence, and very often right on throughout life.

In man the sex instinct is different from what it is in animals, at least in some ways. It is different because it is more elaborate; essentially it is the same, but through the process of man's evolution, this instinct, which in animals is concerned with almost only a physical feeling, in man has become linked on to many of his more highly evolved activities. It has become linked on to nial affection, to comradeship, to the feelings of family life, to honour, to self-respect. We no longer speak of it as physical passion, but we call it Love. That Love is the mainspring of life, its biologic destination is parenthood, and that is what we have to safeguard when we are contemplating sex education.

Now, if we realise, when we face this question of sex education, that we are really looking at the problem of moulding and training of life aright, that we are trying to keep something that is wholly destined for good on good lines, then we can have a constructional view of sex education, which is better than a negative or preventive view.

We can look at this sex education from three points of view. There is the question of giving information to safeguard from ignorance, there is also the question of training the habit of life, physical, mental and emotional, so as to safeguard against lack of self-control, and, thirdly, there is the development of an ethical or moral code in regard to sex relations, combining with this a high ideal of personal and racial responsibility.

In regard to the first, the giving of information, many people ask when they should begin. Begin when the child wants to know—and the child usually wants to know somewhere between the ages of three and seven. The first early questions concerning the origin of babies are the questions that should be answered truly, not untruly. Simply, certainly, with just sufficient information to satisfy the child's curiosity, but let the information be true. Let us discard the fairy tales such as we have been giving the children in the past. The child's intelligence develops much more rapidly than adults realise, and consequently we think that the child is satisfied when we tell it that baby came from a cabbage patch or a gooseberry bush. Some children may be satisfied for the time being, but some are not. These little searchings after truth which nature has implanted in the child's mind are right. Children are naturally curious about these subjects in early years, and we ought to realise that it is the right time for them to be curious, and the right time to answer their questions. The first questions are usually concerning motherhood, and these may be easily answered. We have to recognise that children differ very much, and some children are satisfied with a very simple tale, but others want to know more. Some are satisfied to know that baby grew in a little nest in mother's body, just near her heart, but some say, "But how did I get out?" It is quite easy to say, "Well, of course, nature made a little opening." Some children want to know where the opening is. "Nature puts all her openings in places where no harm will come to them, and this opening from the nest is one of the most important openings of the body, and therefore placed in a very well protected part just between the hips." That is one of the ways in which such a question may be answered, always helping children to see the wonder and the beauty and the extraordinary provisions that are made. The question of fatherhood will probably arise later, and the best way to explain the function of fatherhood is to have ready what we call, for the sake of brevity, a biologic approach; thus, by having a simple study of plants and

animals already in our minds, and having through that the right terminology to employ, the right explanation of the function may be given. . . . I have not time to enlarge upon this point now. The provision of this biologic approach is very important. It may be provided through the schools, it may also be provided through the homes, where the mothers will help their children to understand things that are all round about them. If the child's mind be prepared in that way, when we come to the stage of puberty, and certain signs show us that the girl or boy is approaching the stage of life when the racial organs are adopting their second function, it will be possible to forewarn the children of the changes that are likely to occur, and in that way safeguard them from any shock, and also safeguard them from the necessity of seeking help from outsiders. If parents have built up in that way a confidence between themselves and their children, further advice on the subject of marriage and parenthood will, as time goes on, naturally follow. I am quite sure that the silence which develops through this lack of confidence between mothers and daughters leads mothers so often to neglect this aspect of their daughters' education, and many girls pass into marriage without any preparation at all.

To pass to the second question in regard to the proper training of children, let me say, as time is short, very briefly, that right from birth onwards everything possible should be done to train children in habits of self-control, and to encourage children to develop habits of activity. All that can be done to help children to form these habits of activity will help to safeguard them, for when they do come to the time when their emotional life is imposing trials upon them, they will be able to face their trials with more serenity than if they had no other means of self-expression except their sex.

In regard to the third point, the moral and ethical training, I know this is a matter upon which we are all convinced; children ought to have some direction in regard to the morals of sex, and different people will approach that question in different ways. We are people of all shades of religious opinion and all shades of ethical thought, and therefore I shall not enlarge upon this point of ethical training, feeling that each will approach that side of the question in the way that seems to her best, because there are so few of us who are in accord on these matters of ethics. At the same time, I should like to point out that a very great deal can be done incidentally, by seizing such opportunities as literature affords of placing before children high ideals, and opportunities of explaining to children things that they otherwise may not understand.

There are many other things to say in connection with this matter of sex education, but, in conclusion, let me point out to you that before we can go very much further forward in this question of education of children, we must have a vast body of adults prepared, ready for the work. When we have this vast body of adults—parents, teachers, social workers, Church workers—all of them ready to do their share, understanding the place that sex plays in nature and in society, understanding the pitfalls that society places before girls and boys and adults, then these will realise not only the magnitude of their task, but the possibilities of it, then we may go forward. (Applause.)

#### DR. BARBARA TCHAYKOVSKY.

Whenever I listen to Miss March, I always dread lest her time should be up before she has been able to do more than introduce her subject, but in her book, "Towards Racial Health," on sale at the International Suffrage Shop stall outside this hall, you will find, as I did, the question very fully treated. During the last two years our minds have been concentrated on this very subject, for the war has made us put aside all personal things and live, as it were, outside ourselves. Life has suddenly been fraught with a greater

significance for us. The great problems of the treatment of venereal disease and the grave revelations of the reports of the falling birth rate have been subjects of public inquiry, and have made us realise the part we have to play in securing the immortality of the race. This immortality depends upon the relation of the sexes, and this relation is a subject that the woman's movement has brought to the fore, because it makes for family happiness or unhappiness. What is wrong in this relation? It is surely lack of understanding, and this war is sweeping away many of the barriers to such an understanding, barriers not only of class and caste, but also of sex. Men and women are coming to understand each other better, and are learning to realise that the attitude of the world towards women is the very gravest danger to the immortality of the race. We have lived hitherto in a wholly man-made world. Man has the power that strength gives, and he can use that strength brutally for his own advantage or wisely for the benefit of society. He is beginning to realise that, alone, he cannot make the best use of his power, and that only in co-operation with woman can he build up the future.

This morning's session will have shown you what a deep debt of gratitude we owe to men like Lord Sydenham and to women like Christabel Pankhurst, who have broken the old conspiracy of silence and made it a stern duty for men and women to know definitely something of the dangers that threaten the race through diseases, the result of immoral excesses. Men have hitherto divided women into two classes—those existing for their self-indulgence and those related to themselves. Such a division is a purely artificial one. A woman is a woman all the world over. (Applause.) If men must impose their brute force on one of these classes, then let them honour that class. There are 38,000 illegitimate babies every year. One would think that many a man would regret what he had done, but we do not find that. It is the women and not the men who come forward to help to keep the unmarried mothers with their babies, knowing that by so doing they are aiding such mothers to preserve their self-respect and to become useful members of society. You should all study the Report on Venereal Diseases, and, specially the sections on educative measures. There you see what ignorance there is in the medical profession. I have felt for a very long time that this profession has failed in its mission to the world. (Applause.) It ought to have taught people to live more cleanly, more purely; instead, it has shirked its responsibility. I do not think it can do so in the future, for men and women will now insist on knowledge of such vital importance to the race. The medical profession has no right to keep these things hidden, and the report tells us that it is the profession itself that needs education upon these subjects. We doctors know quite enough to realise what these social diseases are and what ravages they cause, but our social conscience has not been sufficiently awakened for us to spread this knowledge. Our men and women should all be taught to think, to live and to work racially. Lady Selborne, speaking on the falling birth rate, says, "Why should we criticise efforts to limit the family, if continuing the race be a purely personal matter? If it is a national matter, let the responsibility of rearing a family be a national responsibility." I think that the medical profession should not merely be regarded as a means of livelihood, but as a great body for social reform. It should rank with the profession of the preachers, the teachers, the uplifters of the human race. The world movement is uniting us all, and each of us feels an urgent call to do something towards securing the immortality of the race. We must teach the growing generation positively and definitely what they are to strive for. As Lord Lytton reminds us, negations and prohibitions alike are futile. Miss March spoke of training the social instinct—we all know the force of tradition in school and college life—yet we send our children out into the world from school and from college quite

unprepared by any racial tradition for the biggest problem they will have to face—parenthood—while the very future of the race depends upon their understanding it aright. (Applause.)

### MRS. PICKETT (AUSTRALIA).

I think there is one thing which we should do; we should demand the same moral standard from our sons-in-law that we do from our daughters-in-law. We women are rather apt to forget that, I think, in dealing with this question. Also, when a boy is young we ought to teach him that he ought to train his mind to govern his body. The great thing is to teach him while he is young. When a boy is young, if we teach him the sacredness of these organs I think we shall get over the difficulty. I have much pleasure in moving the resolution.

### MRS. DRAKE (WORKERS' SUFFRAGE FEDERATION).

In seconding this resolution, I am going to speak as a mother, and should like to mention my own experience. I was a very curious child, and asked my mother questions, and she was like a good many of you here. Though these questions have been discussed in a very nice way, you have had to close your eyes to the picture drawn for your imagination, and have thought you could not talk like that to your children. That, of course, was not in the mind of the speaker, because, by a long study of these things, she has made herself familiar with them. My mother was one of those delicate-minded women, and the most definite information I could get from her was "As the twig is bent, so the tree is inclined." She would never be frank about these matters, but left me to draw my own conclusions.

At school the things I learnt were ugly and untrue, and since I became a woman I have realised how wrong it is that children should obtain garbled information, as I did, and how difficult it is for all mothers to teach their children.

That is the big thing we are faced with; nearly all mothers are afraid of this subject. They do not know either what to teach or how to teach their children.

This is a splendid meeting here, but of what use is it to our working-class mothers? You are already educated on these questions, and your being here is a waste of time unless you are prepared to take the responsibility of the knowledge you have got and help to educate those who are less fortunate.

I should like to suggest that in the schools the boys and girls, from the age of eleven, should be systematically taught in these matters. The girls by a woman nurse and doctor, the boys by a man nurse and doctor. This can be more easily done in the schools than by the parents at home. The motto put before the children should be "Sacred thy body, even as thy soul."

The medical profession—doctors, midwives, chemists, nurses, etc.—are fully alive to the fact that ignorance of these things is a serious evil, but they will not impart their knowledge to those who consult them.

To prove this, I may mention the case of a policeman's wife whom I know. Her husband before their marriage had been a valet. He had not been brought up well. He had lived, and continued to live a "fast" life. She was a country girl, a very good girl, whose only fault was absolute ignorance, the earliest result of which was the birth of the first child immediately after their marriage. The family number five now, and the two eldest are lovely girls of eleven and thirteen. The mother said to me, "I must teach them; I cannot let them grow up and suffer as I did. I am afraid of their father's influence, and how can I safeguard them?" I advised her what simple books to get for her girls, and I realised then, as you must do, what a curse this conspiracy of silence is.



The result of the conspiracy is that a million pounds are being spent in trying to cure what a thousand pounds spent in education would prevent.

Another young girl, the daughter of a tradesman, was employed as a barmaid at a public-house. She stayed five years in one situation. She married the son of the publican, who was a hairdresser. Before marriage she knew that he had false hair, but thought that was because of his profession. She was a healthy girl, but her first and second child were born dead. The third child is blind of one eye, and the mother is warned that her daughter will probably die at puberty. The fourth child has tuberculosis of the brain. The mother is now carrying the fifth child, and her health is entirely gone. She asks, "What will be the future of my children, who are without health and strength?" Had she been educated in these matters, I can assure you she would have had a different and a happier life, because she is an intelligent woman.

We must demand that the doctors shall be made responsible for telling the truth to their patients, and educated to their responsibility on these matters, so that mothers may be taught, and be able to teach their children.

If we mothers are too shy to teach our children, because we have not trained ourselves to speak on these things, we must continually urge that books shall be easily procurable, and shall not be, as at present, too expensive for the workers to buy. My eldest daughter is twelve, and directly she could read I gave her books on this subject, but told her not to talk about them.

There are plenty of pamphlets out there in the corridor. Who is going to get them? You who do not need them? You condemn the poor for having such large families, but you should blame yourselves for not doing your best for them. I say put this knowledge into the hands of the poorest people and let them see that knowledge serves them best. It is the business of women to attend to these matters. Let us get on to the local authorities, and see that this education is given in schools. The future of the race is bound up in it. Better than charity is the national right to knowledge. Money is found to destroy life, and money must be found to save it. (Applause.)

#### MISS ABADAM (CATHOLIC WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE SOCIETY).

I feel a considerable sense of responsibility in addressing this meeting of women of British blood, women from many parts of the earth, but of our race, and particularly because I am persuaded that the evils that we are out to fight will be fought to a finish by the women of our blood. I tell you honestly that the whole thing will be done when women make up their minds that they will not marry an unfit man. The world has become over-sexed, over-sexation has led to over-indulgence, over-indulgence has led to disease, disease has been carried by the man to his innocent wife and still more innocent child, and you have your Royal Commission to-day telling you that 50 per cent. of your infant mortality is due to this cause alone. That means to say that the mothers of half the children who die in infancy married unfit men. Here is the indictment, and I want you to take it home. There is another disease which does not affect the children so much, but it creates sterility in the mother. That finds an echo to-day. When we are thinking of the lowered birth rate, let us bring the fault home to the right shoulders.

The truth of the matter is, that it is the men who have taken the wheel of life, played with it like a naughty child, and broken it in pieces. They have taken the great life-producing power, and turned it into a death-dealing power, and they have gone downwards from that till human depravity can go no lower.

Have you ever heard of Phallic worship? It was the worship of the mystery of life under the symbols of the organs of reproduction, and the old Jewish prophets fulminated their most vehement protests against the people who indulged in this worship. They cut down the groves and the trees, and the people were warned to take no part in it. I ask myself what supreme sentence these old Jewish prophets could have found which would be severe enough for the man of to-day who shows no reverence for the mystery of life, who uses it unto death, and poisons the great wells of existence. Now, how has this come about? It is obvious there must be a reason for it. There are two reasons, and one is perhaps, roughly, a physiological reason and the other an economic reason. The physiological reason is this, it must be obvious that a man treats this particular function more as a sport than a woman does. He has no far-sighted expectancy of pain as a result of it. He is the irresponsible pleasure-seeker; she is the responsible pain-bearer. The woman is an element of restraint, partly because she builds the body, she has knowledge of the building and of the thing built, she has instinct, she alone knows times and seasons. She has made the ritual of life, which is called the law of the mother, and the law of the mother is closely observed by every sub-human race. Shall we take the race that is nearest to ours, the chimpanzee? The rule with them is that they keep to one mate till that mate dies. The female chimpanzee is a stern sort of mate. She only understands sex for building life, and during the long period of gestation she never admits her mate's advances; indeed, if he were to persist she would tear him to pieces. That is the law of the mother. She only understands the welfare of her child, and as long as that child is dependent on her she knows no mate. The second reason for the horrible evils we have to face is the economic subjection of women. From the first the woman has been the poor sex, the man the rich sex. Now, when women depend for their livelihood on man, you have the basis of immorality.

My words are to women, for women are destined to carry the race onward. For remedy I put in the first place our enfranchisement. We can do nothing as long as our hands are bound. We need to alter the laws. I am not sure that there should not be some measure of punishment for the man who is proved to be the cause of the death of his children by syphilis. If he had taken a chopper and killed his child he would be held to be a murderer, but he can kill many children the other way and go free. The child murderers are not all in the Zeppelins. You must have a true death certificate for the child. At present you cannot trust it, for the doctor is liable to be prosecuted for libel. I should like, too, to see a health certificate before marriage signed by four doctors, two women and two men.

Further, we must reform the stage, we must purify fiction, we must fight drink, and we must reform dress. I welcome with all my heart the appearance of uniformed women. The less you differ from the man in dress, the less there will be of sex attraction. Help us to get rid of the doll, the parasite, for until they are gone you will not see woman as she was meant to be by her Maker.

Just at this time, when war is decimating our population, nothing less than a shriek comes from every quarter of the country, "Give us children." Now, to give children unconditionally is the work of a bondwoman; the free woman serves a higher law. The children of the future are bending over the parapet of heaven to listen to the woman's reply. "I am weary," she says, "of bringing forth the diseased and the dying and the dead. I am weary of giving my all for what—a dead child. I feel the spirit of freedom beginning to move in me. I will make a pact with my man. I will undertake to give him children if he on his part will undertake to give me clean children. I will willingly be a joyful

mother of children, if they be joyful children. I will not bring forth death and corruption any more, for it is written 'Thou shalt be called the mother of the living.'" (Applause.)

### MISS MARCH.

The first point upon which I have made a note is the matter of a single moral code, that we should expect the same from our boys as from our girls. I cordially agree. Neither man's life nor woman's life is injured if they voluntarily preserve perfect continence. I prefer to approach the subject from the scientific side, because it is on that side that we have knowledge and facts, and when we know the physiology of sex, when we recognise the two functions of sex, then we can understand how it is that a person who does not exercise the racial functions may remain in perfect health.

Mrs. Drake mentioned that she thought we ought to have this teaching in our schools. I feel that both parents and teachers may do their part in solving the question, but we know that parents on the whole do not know how to do it, and I have every sympathy with them because they themselves were not taught truly in childhood, they have had to find out everything in haphazard ways, and they do feel a shrinking. So, while parents are feeling themselves not yet ready, we ask for someone else to help the parents of this generation to do their duty if they can, to educate the parents of the future that these may do their duty more easily when their time comes to do it. I look to the teachers to help us a great deal, because through the teachers we have the possibility of national influence. All the children pass through our schools, and in the teachers we have a body of people with trained minds to bring to these complex problems. Teachers, next to parents, are in intimate relation with children. Mrs. Drake mentioned that she would like to see the school doctors and nurses doing it. I do not uphold that for the following reasons. Under our present system of school medical visits, the doctor rarely sees any child more than once in a year, and there are difficulties, because a doctor cannot, under these circumstances, do much more than seize the psychological moment, if it happen to arise during a visit. If sex instruction is to be given, it must be given gradually through a long series of nature lessons. It should also be included in simple physiology and hygiene lessons. At present all our text books ignore the fact that we have racial organs at all. But unfortunately we have not yet many teachers ready to do it. Willing as many of them are—I have spoken to many of them—we must recognise it is a big thing to do, and it takes long preparation. Mrs. Drake also mentioned that the instruction should begin at eleven; it should begin much earlier than that, but gradually. The majority of children know the facts by ten and a half. Children's environment varies very much, and they know in the wrong way. It should be part and parcel of our campaign to prevent this wrong knowledge from getting into children's minds.

With regard to the finer discrimination in marriage, I uphold that absolutely, but on different lines from the last speaker. The racial instinct is an emotional condition of the organism. When we are dealing with the question of marriage, or, at any rate, with the processes involved in marriage, we are dealing with nothing that is rational or intellectual at all. We are dealing with an emotion, and the emotional condition is good, it is powerful, the more sensitive the organism itself is in regard to sex, the better it is for the race. Therefore, our finer discrimination in marriage will result in finer sensitiveness. We are up against the problem of training the emotions. We should help our girls and boys to cultivate such a refined sensitiveness in regard to their possible future that they could not link their lives with the lives of any who are unfit either morally or physically.

I could not help feeling that the last speaker was rather hard on men. We have to remember that many men have many trials in their lives. Some would say they have made them for themselves. No, it is the result of their evolution. Again, I am looking at the thing scientifically. A man's physical organism is different from a woman's, because the male organism has developed on a different line from the female organism. A woman has not only to perform a certain act as far as parenthood is concerned, but her body has to be prepared for nine months nursing. We find that the woman's organism is less violent than the man's organism, because in man the whole part that he has to play is one act only, consequently the whole of his emotional condition is concentrated towards the performance of that act, and the sex feelings in man are consequently more violent than in woman. Now, if man is endowed with a more difficult nature, in that sense it seems he has much more trial in life. Therefore part of our problem is to train boys so that they will develop more selectiveness, and can thus face sex stimuli coolly. It is through sex attraction that we have evolved to be what we are, therefore by no means eliminate sex attraction—intensify sex attraction, but help boys to grow up into men who will understand sex better, and who will be able to control themselves better. Very many of these men whose present condition we deplore were victims of ignorance in the beginning. They were perhaps told they must have sex intercourse if they wanted to be strong men. Perhaps they had this wrong information at school when quite young. For this reason I think we ought to look at the men's side more tolerantly, and try to do something for our boys and girls so that each sex may develop wisely along its own line. (Applause.)

The resolution was carried unanimously.

**FRIDAY, JULY 7th, 1916.**

**Morning Session, 10 a.m.—1 p.m.**

*SUBJECT: Women and the Industrial World.*

CHAIR: MRS. BRACHER (NEW ZEALAND), in the absence of Mrs. Pember Reeves.

This morning I have great pleasure in introducing to you Miss Margaret Ashton, Town Councillor of Manchester. On the City Council in Manchester there are two women, and we have this morning one of these two representatives in the person of Miss Ashton.

Speaking generally, I think that Englishwomen frequently neglect municipal work. This is probably owing to the strange state of the municipal franchise, which, I think, Miss Ashton will explain to us.

In South Africa, I am told, the women, although as yet they have not the political franchise, are doing a great deal in the way of municipal work, and in South Africa there are many women who are town councillors.

I will now call on Miss Ashton to give her address.

**MISS MARGARET ASHTON.**

The challenge to the women of England by our friend from Overseas that they are not taking sufficient part in municipal work is one which I want to take up. I do not know how many in this audience are from Overseas, or how many are of the British Isles, but those of us who live here realise, and I should like Overseas friends to know, that in England the municipal franchise for women is very much restricted. Women have no municipal franchise unless they are single women living alone (in which category I am), or are widows. No married woman in England can have the municipal franchise, and no daughter living at home, and as the majority of women in England are married women it naturally narrows down the franchise to spinsters and widows, very largely to middle-aged widows or elderly widows of the working classes, who have never been accustomed to take any interest in public affairs, nor have had any opportunity of taking such interest. This has been one of the greatest disadvantages.

Now we have started in many towns what are called Women Citizens' Associations, or Local Government Associations, for voters, but it is only a limited number of women who can become members of these organisations because of the marriage bar. Our free sisters from Overseas can perhaps hardly realise the position in England of the married woman, how she is hedged in and countered and suppressed at every turn, till we, the unmarried women of England, are often exceedingly sorry for our married sisters, and wonder that so many have been brave enough to give up their individuality.

As regards the real subject that I have to talk about this morning—the opportunities for reconstruction in industry and social affairs after the war—I want to lay great stress on the necessity for the

recognition of women as individuals. Had it not been for the long years of suffrage working, of suffrage struggling, and of suffrage demonstrations, the married woman would still have been in the condition of absolute dependence on her husband. Women have never been considered as individuals, entirely responsible for their own lives, and have been obliged to accept a wage which did not enable them to put by for old age. The assumption in England has always been that a woman was more or less dependent on some person or persons who were responsible for her throughout her life, and that she was not self-dependent, an individual with individual needs and an individual outlook of her own. This has led very largely to the underpayment of women. We are always told that the basis of the payment of men is that they have a wife and family to keep, but we have never been able to get that recognition for women. In an inquiry made by the Fabian Women some two or three years ago it transpired that in the various industries and professions examined half the women were not only self-supporting, but were supporting dependents as men. This is fairly universal, and therefore it is wrong to base payment on the assumption that women support only themselves.

Now, in this time of war it has been recognised more than ever before, that women must be paid an adequate wage, lest both the men and women of the country suffer by women being employed on men's work at an inferior rate. The employers have been able, unfortunately, to protect themselves against paying an equal wage to women except in a very few instances. We hear a good deal of the tremendous wages earned by munition workers, but it is only a minority of the women who get that large wage; some are getting the same pay as men, but the great mass of them are not even receiving the 21s. minimum promised by the Government, and this even in Government works, and Government, of course, to-day, as always, is the chief employer of labour, and when the chief employer of labour does not come up to his own standard you cannot expect the private employer to do better. There are many cases where employers in munition works are giving their women this 21s., but, on the other hand, there are a great many who are still employing women, with the cost of living high as it is to-day, at from 13s. to 16s. a week. These women are in the position of sweated workers, and this is going on all over the country, so that although we have protective recommendations and Acts to-day, large numbers of women are still underpaid. This is also the case in many of the trades that are not so directly or evidently connected with the war, but still are classed under the Munitions Act, such as the clothing, leather, and similar trades, and various small industries. In these trades we are still fighting to get a minimum wage fixed. And when we find Government by its Wages Boards settling wages, as it did just a year before the war in the clothing trade, at 6d. an hour for men and 3d. an hour for women, we recognise that women have still a long fight before them to secure decent wages in any of the trades over which even Government takes supervision. They have not yet risen to the idea that women's work is worth paying a living wage for.

One fact worth noticing is that where women are getting good pay and being adequately fed and cared for they are not breaking down in health. Well-fed women, well-conditioned women, who have not to go home and do a day's work in the house after a day's work in the factory, are not the women who break down. It is the underpaid, sweated women who by their ill-health have caused the difficulty in Health Insurance Societies. The great industrial struggle for women after the war will be to secure equal pay for equal work. All through the war employers have been re-arranging the work in munition factories, putting in machinery to do away with heavy labour, putting women on new machines that were never run by men

before, and this has made it possible to establish a new and low rate for work done on these machines without contravening the Munitions Act. And there is also the question of juvenile labour in these works, which disastrously affects women's wages, for a boy of 14 is often considered and paid as the equivalent of a woman of 18.

One reason why especially now we must stand for equal pay is that after this war marriage will be out of the question for many women; they will of necessity remain single, and their future will have to be provided for by themselves. It is generally recognised that women do not age at the same rate as men; working women in particular age much earlier than men, and one of the grave difficulties that all of us, dealing with war conditions, have been faced with is that the under-fed woman of 45 to 60 is unemployable in industrial work of a good class. After 60 you may broadly say that women are quite unemployable in industries. There are exceptions, but the bulk of women in England of the working classes are done by the time they are 60, and they live till they are over 70. Old age pensions begin in England at 70, and there are these 10 years between 60 and 70 when a woman cannot keep herself and there is no State aid for her. Those without husband or child to support them have had largely to rely on the Poor Law to supplement casual earnings, and one of the problems after war will be the infinitely larger number of women who will be in this position, and who have never been able, owing to low wages, to put by for their old age.

As regards all these difficulties, we shall have to take a very definite stand after the war. Many of these industrial women were called by the Government out of their own little underpaid trades, luxury trades, etc., which have practically gone under, and will never be re-started. Many are the women who would have been wives, but will now be single all their lives, and there will be greater competition from single women than there has been in the past, and it will be impossible to turn them out of their new work. We have to recognise that we cannot deal with this problem simply as a class problem. It is going to hit women of every rank and position; it is going to hit every industry and profession. Women's position in the old world was established on the basis of marriage as the ultimate end. It is truly not the highest view of marriage, but none the less the idea has been at the back of much custom and law, that the usual provision for woman was a husband on whom she would be in part, or wholly, dependent for her living. For long years this has been false enough, but war and its resulting slaughter of men has made the supposititious dependence of women an impossibility, and the moment has come to recognise the self-dependence of woman and to base conditions and payment on the reality and not on the fictions of existence; a living wage with the margin to provide for old age is the necessity for the woman worker of to-day. The State has begun at last to recognise the unique service of woman as the mother of the race, e.g. the new provision of maternity benefit, of funds for schools for mothers and maternity centres, the recognition of the wife and the unmarried wife of the soldier by the direct allowances made since war began, and this will make its mark on the future legislation affecting women and their status after war. After the war we must seek to ensure not only equal pay for equal work, but equal opportunity for equal ability. I lay even more stress on equal opportunities than on the equal wage, for our opportunities have been so hindered, so hedged round hitherto, both in the professions and industries. Take even the freest of our professions—that of medicine. Women doctors do not get the same opportunities as men; they are rarely appointed on the staff of general hospitals, and do not get the experience of men doctors before they enter into practice. Of course, Law is barred to women in England; it is a close corporation. Some of our free sisters will recognise that here they are in a far better position than

we are. Men make laws and administer them, and have so far been able to keep women out of the law, and we shall have to make a very strenuous effort to open this and all the professions, as well as the industries, to women.

As to equal pay, that also does really need to be established, and here comes in one of the greatest problems. It has always been argued that you cannot pay a woman as much as a man because she is not so permanent in her employment. But I think that we overestimate the idea of the permanence of people in employment. We see men leaving their employment quite habitually to better themselves. Why, if marriage is to better yourself, should that not be considered equally reasonable for woman?

It is true that in some industries women are not quite as useful all round as men. The work is often divided and specialised for women, but it is equally true that women do certain work a great deal better than men. Take the instance of the Post Office and the Bank of England, where women can detect forged notes much better than men because of the finer sensitiveness of their fingers; but the women are paid less because they are women, even though they do better than the men. We must get that put right. Where women do work better than men women must be paid better than men. To-day people say that women cannot be allowed to earn really large wages, and employers cut down the rates of time or piece work in order to escape giving women that wage. I know of a case where an employer found that certain women in engineering were making such high wages—over £5 (more than the men were able to get off the same machinery)—that he said it was impossible to go on paying women such wages. It was not that he was losing, he was gaining on them, but he could not let them make such “good money”; it was wrong in principle, he said; so he altered a nut here and a bolt there, to differentiate the machine from the men’s, and thus avoided the necessity of an equal wage. That is an example of the attitude of mind that prevails towards women in industry. All of us Suffragists recognise that if as good work or better can be got out of women on the same machine as out of men it is bad for the men that the women should be paid at a lower rate.

There is a third point in the regulation of industry after the war. We have seen the work women can do, we have seen the new industries women have been entering; we have yet to know what the cost to women physically may be, and to the future of the race. We cannot judge yet. I am inclined to think that it will not be as grave as was feared in the first instance, because with better pay women are better fed than they have been before. Another fact to recognise is the different way in which women work. They can work with tremendous speed, but for shorter hours than men. Men can go slogging on for 12 hours a day, for six days a week. Women cannot do that and turn out good work and continue in health. All labour legislation has been made to suit the male worker; after the war, with the continued influx of women in industry, we shall have to see that the particular characteristics of women are considered. I am of opinion that half-time work for women may be one solution. I am not fond of half-time because I come from Lancashire, and have seen a good deal of half-time among children, where it is absolutely disastrous in every way; but for adult women, working at the speed at which they appear habitually to work it may be a good thing. This speed is not only in war time, but in peace time, too; there is a greater output from women than from men in many sorts of work. Women work with more concentration and rapidity, and are on the whole more conscientious than men, and, though this is not yet recognised, they become expert more quickly than men, and labour laws and apprenticeship rules will have to fit women as well as men after the war. It will be difficult to make these different arrangements for



men and women, but it will not be impossible. One thing alone can make it impossible—that women still remain unrepresented. (Applause.) It is there that we need the help of the community more than ever before. We have only to look back to the condition of the voteless workers after the Napoleonic wars for a comparison which is very useful. After those huge wars—and for those days they were huge—the suffering was correspondingly huge. When the men came back, just as our men will come back, there was the same disorganisation of industry, the same overwhelming difficulty in adjusting hours, wages, etc., the whole of industry was shaken to its foundation. In those days all the employed were unrepresented, and the employers, with the best intentions in the world, I believe, did not make the industrial position possible for the workers, and after long years of unrest, ending up with famine, it was only when famine became too acute that it was recognised that the workers themselves must be entitled to speak for themselves in the legislature. There will be the same thing after this war. A huge mass of women workers will be unrepresented, there will be nobody to put their case in Parliament. It is easier for women to be heard than it was 10 or 15 years ago, but we still have no power in our hands to enforce our will in Parliament. We women find that Members of Parliament, who do not depend on our votes, and are not responsible to us, do not give the detailed care to our questions that they do to those who elected them. "We are so busy with the men," as one M.P. said, "that we have no time to give to the women." But the whole of the industry of the country will have to be reorganised after the war, and it will very largely depend on the conditions that prevail for women how we shall recover from this fearful calamity. I hope that all gathered here, the Overseas sisters especially, who are free, will be able to make their voices heard—I implore the Overseas women to do all they can to help to set free the women here in England, by giving the Government to understand that it has not been disastrous to enfranchise women out there, and cannot be disastrous to free women here. We need the real power to help in solving these problems after the war. We want the vote at once, and the Overseas women in London who are free ought to do everything in their power to make Members of Parliament understand what it is that the English women are asking for, and how vital it is for the nation that we take our share in the reconstruction after the war. (Applause.)

MRS. BRACHER.

I will now call on Mrs. Salmond, of the Fabian Women's Group, to propose the first resolution.

MRS. SALMOND.

The resolution which I have the honour to propose is, I believe, already in your hands:—

"That in the opinion of this Conference there should be no differentiation of payment for work on account of the sex of the worker."

I think there has never been greater need for such a resolution than at the present time. There is no need for me to remind you of the extremely low rate of wages paid to women. It was shown some years ago that where the output of a woman was two-thirds that of a man, her wage was but half, and the Labour Year Book this year gives the average wage of a man as 25s. 0d., and that of a woman as 10s. 10d.—about two-fifths. Now, why are women's wages so low? I submit that the following points bear very largely on the question:—(1) Custom, the tradition to which Miss Ashton has already alluded, that woman is not self-supporting and that she has no dependents; (2) physical disabilities; (3) lack of skill; and (4) marriage.

With regard to the first point—custom. Professor Smart advances the view that a woman is paid a customary wage, whereas men who are not unskilled workers receive a wage which is ultimately determined by the results of the production. This customary wage is based on a very low standard of personal needs, and the tradition that a woman has other means of support, and this tradition creates a great deal of our present difficulty. We have heard Miss Ashton mention the Fabian Women's report of "Wage-earning Women and Their Dependents," written by Miss Smith. I would recommend it to you all. Miss Smith's figures show that 50 per cent. of women are supporting others beside themselves. The figures vary in different trades. The inquiry shows 75 per cent. in the laundry trade, 66 per cent. among cotton workers, 53 per cent. domestic servants, and so on. The report also includes an inquiry made in an outlying district of London among workers with an average wage of 7s., and it was shown that among these, 84 per cent. were entirely self-supporting, and that nearly 62 per cent. contributed to the cost of the family, in addition to paying the whole of their own cost of living. It is estimated that three millions of occupied women are supporting others beside themselves. It is clearly shown that economic self-dependence is a necessity in a vast majority of cases.

Modern authorities are inclined to admit that the physical disabilities of women have been considerably over-stated, but one point does stand out very clearly—the point to which Miss Ashton alluded, that the low wages of women have affected their physical health. It is a good many years since Sidney Webb wrote: "Would not women be able to work better if they learned to eat more?" Dr. Ethel Bentham has stated that since the beginning of the war it has been shown that women employed in heavy physical work, under fair conditions, have improved in health, because they have been able to obtain better food.

The question of lack of skill is intimately connected with marriage. The early marriage of women in the working classes leads them to take their work less seriously than men do. They have not been given so long a training; but the war will have a very great effect upon these two points. The number of women in the industrial market has increased enormously because of the war. They have been introduced into skilled and semi-skilled labour, and have shown a dexterity and acquired knowledge in a manner which is really astonishing. It has been estimated that a very large number of men (possibly two million) will not return to industry after the war, and this, of course, will tend to force women into industry. Again, many women who would formerly have married will remain single, and others, as widows, will be thrown back into the labour market.

Let us consider the effect of these low wages. It does not take very much examination to show that a woman whose wage is such that she can barely obtain the necessities of life will deteriorate rapidly. But what about the women with dependents? Statistics show that the women of the working class marry young, are longer-lived than men, and, before the war, among women over 20 years of age one woman in eight was a widow, many of these having young children. Existence for these was only possible with the aid of relief from the Poor Law, and even then the children have been under-fed and ill-clothed.

With regard to the man worker and his wife, how is he affected by the women's low wage? He is threatened with a huge mass of cheap, unorganised labour, which will tend to drag down his wage and drive him out of the trade. Now, this danger existed before the war. In certain sections of the pottery trade women were employed on similar work as men at a lower wage, and eventually men were driven out of the trade. Since the war we have had this

great influx of women into industry, and, unfortunately, they are largely unorganised. That is one of the terrible troubles we have to face. Partly for patriotic and partly for economic reasons they have been willing to work for long hours and at unduly low wages. When the men come back they will find women in numberless occupations competing with them, and if the woman's wage is lower than the man's it is that lower one that will tend to become the standard wage, and there will be a lowering of conditions for the whole of the working classes.

To the most conscientious employer the low wage, of course, is a constant temptation. The introduction of new processes, the subdivision of labour which has been carried to such an enormous extent, all offer opportunities for the employer to cut down wages. Foreign competition may also again be used to pull down wages. The result of low wages is the physical deterioration of the nation. The children especially suffer, and the State is put to expense with Out Relief, and later with hospital and medical treatment. We have seen how the double standard of pay creates a danger for the man, exposing him to cheap labour, but there is another danger. This double standard tends to make him one of a privileged class, which arouses resentment among women and leads to sex antagonism. The prospect of a conflict between men and women after the war is a thing we should all deplore, but it is not beyond the bounds of possibility. I would urge you as a last word to remember that this demand for an equal scale of pay is quite useless unless there is the right of entry into trade. For this we must look to the co-operation of the Trade Unions. The interests of men and women are one, and our aim surely must be a permanent partnership between organised men and women. (Applause.) I have pleasure in proposing the resolution.

#### MRS. HERRING (N.S.W., AUSTRALIA).

I should like, in seconding this resolution, to refer to the platform of the Women's Liberal League of N.S.W. on this subject. With regard to equal pay for equal work, the Minister for Home Affairs in Australia has said that the Federal Government pay men and women equal salaries for the same class of work, and give equal opportunities to men and women in their services, and we are asking the Parliament of the State of N.S.W. to do the same and set an example to the general public. At the present time we are arranging with other Associations a deputation to protest against the unfair discrimination between men and women, so you see we have made use of the vote to a certain extent.

#### MISS HODGE.

I should like to ask Miss Ashton: Are women unemployable at 60 because they work with more rapidity and concentration than men, taking much more out of themselves, or because they are under-paid, and therefore under-fed?

#### MISS ASHTON.

I am inclined to think that both have some effect upon it. Whatever the cause, women do age physically much more rapidly than men. We have that difficulty to meet. Or it is very likely largely due to lack of care in adolescence, and in the child-bearing years, and to overstrain, and to the bad character of the work they do. The work is not always fitted for women—for instance, charring, washing, cleaning, all these are extremely strenuous physical labour. When you see, as I have seen, a woman cleaning down the whole of a huge warehouse, you recognise it as work entirely unsuited to women. The thing is that only women will undertake it. And

women do all this through child-bearing years. I think that with better conditions, better pay, and better feeding, women need not age so rapidly.

#### MISS HODGE.

In the countries where women have the vote things are in a much better position, and the fact that they age much earlier than men is recognised, because in Australia and in New Zealand, where men obtain their old age pensions at 65 and at 60 if invalided, women receive theirs at 60 and 55.

#### MISS HORNABROOK (SOUTH AUSTRALIA).

I think all Trade Unions are now suffering from the fact of always having kept women out of their ranks. If they had only admitted the women, men would have had better conditions themselves.

The Association which I represent, viz., the Women's Non-Party Political Association of South Australia, lately appointed a sub-committee to inquire into women's work and wages in that State. Referring to this question of equal pay, the report of the sub-committee concludes as follows: "Owing to so many men going to the war, women are being called to take their places in numberless industries, and it is of the greatest importance that women should receive equal pay for equal work, otherwise such men as return to the mill and factory will find that their patriotism has put back industrial progress for more than a generation. The result of our investigations has convinced us that the whole question of women's status and progress is bound up with this fundamental question." (Applause.)

Question: Can Miss Ashton suggest any way in which pressure can be brought to bear on the Government to force them to pay the minimum wage which they themselves have fixed?

#### MISS ASHTON.

The difficulty is that in order to bring pressure to bear you need information; you have then to bring the matter before the local munitions court, which sends it up to the Ministry of Munitions; they send it back, the Court sends it to the employer, the employer sends another statement, and so on, until sometimes 15 months has gone by before the complaint is attended to.

Resolution put to the meeting and carried unanimously.

#### MRS. BRACHER.

I will now call on Miss Anna Martin, who has written so much on the working-class woman, and who is one of our greatest authorities, to address you. Her latest book, which we all should read, is "Mothers in Mean Streets; or, The Toad Under the Harrow." Miss Martin is President of the Rotherhithe Women's Political Association.

#### MISS ANNA MARTIN.

I was asked to address you this morning because I have had special opportunities of studying lives of poor married women at close quarters. Having lived for many years in a district of S.E. London, I have formed friendships with many of these women, and learned to know the inside of their lives as only a friend can. According to the present system a man has the sole control of his earnings, and need not give his wife one farthing of them. Laws protecting married women are class laws, and protect only the wives of the well-to-do. It is said that human nature is kinder than laws, and thus serves to remedy their defects. The checks on the abuses of the marriage system are: (1) mutual love, (2) public opinion, (3) man's

desire for a home and for comfort. Yet the sums men give to keep the home together tend to become the lowest possible. In the investigation of 11 cases of children who required spectacles in a London elementary school, I found on discussing the 11 weekly budgets with the mothers that when the expenditure for absolute necessities had been subtracted, none of them had more than 2d. per day per head left for food. These are no isolated experiences. Mrs. Pember Reeves made the same calculation from the weekly budget of the Lambeth women. The husband, especially when in work, would never consent to a low rate of feeding, and so, in order to provide the breadwinner adequately, the women and children are practically starved. Mr. Sidney Webb tells us that there are about 5,000,000 men in this country who, in normal times, earn under 28s. per week. When you remember that men generally keep from 3s. to 5s. a week for their private needs, you will see that a large proportion of the married women of this country are not, properly speaking, "maintained" at all. The women accept the position with astonishing resignation, and endeavour by earning, to supplement their scanty housekeeping fund. Wives of better-paid workers are no better off than their poorer sisters, for the husband insists on a correspondingly high standard of comfort for himself. The reproach of extravagance against such a housewife is unfair, for she well knows that her husband, if he were not fed as he likes, would dock her allowance and go elsewhere.

Nothing better illustrates the deplorable condition of the married working women of the country than that terrible little book, "Maternity," recently published by the Women's Co-operative Guild. Everyone should read it. It is a painful record of over-work, under-feeding, horrible suffering and permanent injury, and yet the members of that Guild are, as a whole, better off in many respects than the average married working woman. All demands from the educational and medical authorities are in practice requisitions from the mother, for the father will never give money to meet the increased expenditure. It is always the mothers who have to scrape the money together somehow. They earn all they can and cut down their own food and clothing to a minimum, and are too often obliged to cut off the supplies of the younger children, who had none too much before. This is simply manufacturing physical defectives. Many people are working to lessen infant mortality. But the survival of the infant often means less food for its brothers and sisters, as the father does not, and sometimes cannot, give 6d. towards its maintenance.

*The remedy for these evils.*—We must think of marriage as a bargain; the woman undertakes to act as wife and mother, the man undertakes to support her and the dependent children. Now, she is compelled to keep her share of the compact, but the husband need not keep his. Failure of the father to keep his compact should be a ground for divorce or separation, with maintenance for mother and children. Any order for such maintenance issued now is practically a dead letter. The woman must be enabled to draw from some public authority the sum fixed by the court. I am very anxious that no suffrage society shall commit itself to the demand that a wife shall be entitled to a proportion of her husband's wages. The woman's right to maintenance for herself and young children is absolute. If a man cannot or will not maintain his wife and children he must lose their services and their society. He has no right to bring other children into the world or to expect a half-starved woman to go through pregnancy and child-birth.

Now we come to a very difficult question. Multitudes of quite decent men earn far too low wages to enable them to maintain their families. How is it that the worker receives a share of the national dividend which is demonstrably insufficient for the rising generation?

The answer is that it is the low status of the wife which is itself responsible for the poverty wage. The man with little or no sense of family responsibility reduces the wage-rate of those with a higher standard. The greatest difficulty comes from the apathy of the great mass of the working men, most of whom are fairly well content with things as they are. The only way of forcing the level up is by insisting that the man's responsibility for the support of his dependents shall be real and not nominal. If he cannot have a wife without paying for her, he will take care that his wages are high enough for the purpose. The blacklegs, such as those who broke the great waterside strike of 1913—a strike which the outside public did their best to help—are men with no sense of responsibility, who so far from keeping their wives, make their wives bear most of the burden of keeping a roof over their joint heads. In the long run it will be found that no one has paid so heavy a price for the slave working-class wife as her working-class master. (Applause.)

#### MISS NEWCOMB.

I speak on behalf of the Women's Christian Temperance Union of New Zealand and of the Women's Liberal League of New South Wales. I have been appointed as one of the delegates for the Women's Christian Temperance Union; Miss Isitt is the other delegate. The resolution which I propose on behalf of these two distinct and important bodies is as follows:—

“That this Conference urges on all Women's Organisations the duty of inquiring into and making public the legal disabilities of women, and of using every means to secure that a wife shall—

(a) Be legally entitled to a share in her husband's property and income.

(b) Be given equal guardianship with her husband of her children.”

I want you to note the fact that this proposal comes from two countries where women are enfranchised. That such a change in law is still required there is a striking proof that women have a hard fight to fight even after they have got the vote.

I want to draw your attention to a plank in the platform of the Women's Liberal League of New South Wales, so that you may see how matters stand in that State:—“A woman has no right to any share of her husband's property and income, even when this has been created in part by her own industry. She can be left penniless by a rich husband, who has the power of willing away his property to strangers. The children are owned entirely by the father, who may appoint guardians of whom the mother may justly disapprove, and who alone can decide the religious teaching and the education they are to receive.”\* I have much pleasure in proposing the resolution.

#### MISS ISITT (NEW ZEALAND).

I feel some apology is needed from a New Zealand woman who has to second this resolution. It does seem strange that after women have voted there for 23 years a mother in that Dominion has no right to the guardianship of her child. The reasons for her disability appear to me to be: (1) That, until lately, the majority of women were quite ignorant that this right was denied to them. (2) That probably no very flagrant case of injustice has arisen from this disability. There is much more real comradeship between men and women in the newer countries; and public opinion, the product of

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\* Since the B.D.W.S.U. Conference was held news has arrived that the Testator's Family Maintenance Bill, which will presumably bring the law on the subject into line with that in Victoria, is to be brought before the N.S.W. State Parliament by the Attorney-General.

the combined intelligence of the two sexes, would make it impossible for a man to leave his children to a guardianship that was undesirable. There is a Society for the Protection of Women and Children, and this insists on securing for them proper maintenance from the father, as well as their removal from his guardianship if he be an undesirable parent. The Women's Christian Temperance Union, which has been the only women's society in New Zealand to make a distinct legislative demand, has frequently urged that every woman should be legally entitled to a share of her husband's earnings, as economic dependence upon a man is a humiliation to a woman. Every woman has a right to demand from her husband maintenance for her children and for herself.

The resolution was supported by Mrs. Herring (N.S.W.), who gave several distressing instances of the economic dependence of women on their husbands in Australia.

#### MISS BRITTEN (SOUTH AFRICA).

It is with some diffidence that I speak on this question. I have been away from South Africa for 18 months, and I have not got all recent data. Although we are not politically enfranchised in South Africa, we are in some respects a little better off than our sisters in some of the Dominions, for we happen to be under Roman-Dutch law, and under that law women are considerably better treated than under British law. I should like to read a paragraph from a paper written for this Conference by Mrs. Solly, President of the National Council of Women, Cape Town. Mrs. Solly knows a very great deal about South Africa. She puts it thus:—"The whole of South Africa is under Roman-Dutch law, and was so before political or parliamentary Union. Under Roman-Dutch law, the woman of South Africa is in a far better position than her sister in England or under the Code Napoleon. No woman, here, is obliged to look on helpless while her husband divides his time and money between herself and his mistress. No woman whose husband dies intestate, leaving mainly landed property, is hustled out of house and home to make room for the nearest male heir, while only a fraction of his personal property comes to her."

If he dies intestate, I believe, the widow gets the share of two children. Very often when marriages are made in South Africa the parties come before a lawyer and sign a document which entitles the man to his property and the woman to hers. One advantage of this ante-nuptial contract is that men who are declared insolvent are not allowed to throw the home in for the creditors. It is a protection against unscrupulous men. As a rule, however, people are married in "community of property." To quote again from Mrs. Solly: "If married in 'community of property,' a woman has the protection of the joint will, which, unless signed by her as well as her husband, is so much waste paper. But perhaps on that very account a widow finds her want of the vote a very real and vital grievance. She succeeds to her husband's property, responsibilities and duties, but not to the vote which would protect her interests in the face of her servants and labourers. The Roman matron felt her voteless condition less because she was surrounded by voteless workers. The South African woman feels it keenly because she is at a disadvantage before her employés. In three of the four States colour is an absolute bar to the franchise; only in the Cape Province is it otherwise." (Applause.)

Paragraph from a Paper on "The Status of Women in the Transvaal," written for the Conference by Mrs. Krause, Town Councillor of Johannesburg. The words "community of property," under which law women in the Transvaal are married—unless they are sufficiently wide-awake to avail themselves of marriage under ante-nuptial contract—are extremely misleading. Even if the wife fur-

nishes the money and property into the "community," immediately on her marriage she becomes a minor, and in the husband is vested the sole control; the whole estate may be used and administered in any way he chooses, and is liable for debts contracted by him, while the only debts recoverable from the joint estate by the wife are for the common necessities of life. Should the husband desert his wife, and she by her own efforts start a business and make a living, he can return if he so pleases and take possession of all properties and monies. The wife has no redress, because she was married in "community of property"! Advocate Morice once said: "The laws in South Africa, regarding the property of women, are the worst in the world."

#### MISS HODGE.

The difference between the laws of South Africa and the laws of the rest of the British Dominions is of peculiar interest to us. The previous speaker told you that in New South Wales the law allows a man to leave his wife penniless, but in Victoria he cannot will his property away from his wife and children. After a peculiarly flagrant case, in which a man had willed all he possessed to a charity, leaving a wife and family unprovided for, the women of this State succeeded in securing a law by which all such wills could be set aside by the Government, and the first claim upon the testator's estate must be an adequate provision for his wife and family. Even his creditors' claims take a second place. In England Miss Martin tells me the machinery of the law is really sufficient to provide for the wife and children of the well-to-do, if there has been a legal separation. The administration of the law is, however, so imperfect in the case of the poor that the woman can rarely benefit by the provisions of it. This administration is in the hands of the boards of guardians. These bodies, as a rule, hesitate to supply funds to support the deserted wife out of the rates for fear of the opposition of the ratepayers. In Rotherhithe the Board is ready to provide for any woman who has a really justifiable claim, but in other districts this is not the case. The defective administration of the law which was passed three years ago prevents it from being as beneficial as it should be. In New Zealand, where the women have had the vote since 1893, the lazy and neglectful husband is compelled to work by the State, and has no control over the wages, which are paid directly to the wife for the support of the household. If a man is imprisoned in New Zealand, the wife receives the wages for the work he does, and he is given an additional sum on leaving prison if he has worked well. There is a Reciprocity Act between Australia and New Zealand, by which the husband deserting his wife in the one country and fleeing to the other can be constrained to return to home and duty. The Lazy Husbands' Act of California, passed since the women of that State had the vote, is on the same lines as the New Zealand Act. In the Province of Quebec, in Canada, which still retains the French (ante-Napoleonic) Code, if a man deserts his wife he can still have complete control over her property. He can sell her up again and again, and every penny that she earns is legally his. In Quebec the women have no vote, and there is no activity among the women upon political questions.

Thus, it is obvious that it is only in those countries where the woman is enfranchised that her position and that of the child is properly safeguarded, and that both mother and infant are justly regarded as the most important assets of the State.

#### MRS. BOUVIER (WORKERS' SUFFRAGE FEDERATION).

I must really apologise for being here. I feel rather a fraud, because I am not a British woman, and so I am a little out of place on the platform of this British Women's Union, but, since leaving Petrograd, I have had 20 years' residence in this country.



Only by raising the status of married women shall we be able to give men the right and proper conception of woman's place in the body politic, and I wish to appeal to all women here for the urgent need for sincere and strong co-operation among all the women of the world. I represent, in my own person, three of the most important of the countries allied with Great Britain, as I am Russian born and Franco-Italian by marriage. The plea for co-operation, coming from me, should have a greater significance, as I combine in myself so many nationalities. It is most necessary, as soon as the war is over, for the women of all nations to meet together and discuss the legal position of women in their different countries. We could then set about to raise the status of women all over the world. In my native country, which is so great to-day, though it used to be considered as barbarous and uncivilised, the position of women is in some ways superior. We have not in Russia that sex prejudice which is so strong in Great Britain. In Russia, women always found that the opposition to their enfranchisement was not because they were women, but because they were of the people. Men and women were alike in their demand for freedom, liberty and better education. An Act, equivalent to the Married Women's Property Act, the discussion of which occupied so many years in the British Parliament, became law in Russia in the reign of the Empress Catherine towards the end of the 18th century, and it is just as well to remind you that this potentate hailed from the land of the Hun. International relations can only be made better in the future if women unite to make all wars impossible.

We, as speakers for the Suffrage, are all familiar with the parrot cry of the little boys who interrupted our street discourses: "Votes for women, votes for dogs." Even the smallest boy realises that the woman and the mother does not count for much in the community, and we are working to give mothers some hold over their children, and particularly over the minds of their boys. This would naturally result if the mother were on a political equality with the father. Women all over the world must unite in teaching the rising generation a nobler conception of Empire. Let the conception of Empire be a democratic one, not based upon force of arms, but upon mutual, social and international justice. I have great pleasure in supporting the resolution. (Applause.)

#### MRS. PICKETT (VICTORIA, AUSTRALIA).

I do want to impress upon you that when you have got the vote you will have to work most terribly hard. Reforms have not come to pass in Australia without hard work, and the only reason reforms have come to pass is because the men know that they have to hold out a little bait to get the women's vote. Men who want to get into Parliament naturally think out reforms to please women. But the women have very hard work to secure that these promised reforms become law. (Applause.)

Resolution carried unanimously.

## FRIDAY, JULY 7th.

### Afternoon Session, 2.30—4.30. p.m.

*SUBJECT: Children in the Industrial World.*

CHAIR: MRS. BRACHER (NEW ZEALAND).

The first resolution will be moved by Miss Susan Lawrence, a distinguished elected member of the London County Council. There are five women members of the present L.C.C. Three have been co-opted and two elected.

MISS SUSAN LAWRENCE.

The resolution which I have been asked to move runs as follows:—

“That, in the opinion of this Conference,

- (a) No child under the age of 14 should be employed as a wage earner,
- (b) The working hours of young persons of either sex should be limited to six hours per day,
- (c) Attendance of young persons to the age of 18 years at classes for technical instruction should be compulsory,
- (d) Opportunities for technical and professional training should be absolutely equal for the youth of both sexes.”

I feel a sense of modesty, a sense almost of shame, which is familiar to all speakers on educational matters who have to deal with English education in the face of women from Overseas, where they are very much in advance of us, in explaining the intricacies and the anomalies and the shortcomings of our system of education here in England. I feel it more now in the course of the war than at any time previously, because the war has shown us the feebleness of the foundations on which our educational system is based. The fact is, in England our education practically has always been under local authorities. For example, the point as to how long a child can stop at school. A child can come at 3 or 5 years, it may leave at 12, 13, or 14, according to the rule of the local educational authorities under which it lives. Most education authorities have a by-law that the child shall stop at school till 14, and modify this by-law by a condition that the child may leave when a certain standard has been obtained. Up to the declaration of war this exemption by standard was, as far as possible, a secret carefully kept by the teachers and education authorities, but since the war began the use of the labour examination has become general. The figures published deal only with the children who have been exempted from school; we do not know how many children we have lost through the late slackening of the educational discipline. And the same with regard to the employment of school children. There, too, we want above everything else a legal minimum age. At the present time the law says that a child under 11 must not be employed in street trade, that a child under 14 must not be worked after 9 o'clock at night or before 6 in the morning, and the local educational authority can, if it pleases, and only if it pleases, make by-laws further limiting the labour of children attending school. If the local authority

does not choose to interfere, there is nothing in the law of England to prevent a boy or girl under 14 from working five hours a day during five days in the week, and as long as the master likes to employ him on Saturdays and Sundays.

Our resolution goes on to talk of technical instruction. It is idle to talk of it until we secure the fundamentals. When one finds, as now, the newspapers talking of technical instruction as a thing which is to save England, it is allowable to ask the question: what is the good of technical instruction unless we are able to secure a proper elementary foundation? What can we do if children are allowed to work long hours at the will of the local authority, and if children are allowed to leave school under 14?

Talking of industry after the war, the face of industry is changed, and the future will not be for the person who has acquired some special skill, but for the man who has acquired the power which proper training and education gives, who can adapt his mind to a fresh set of circumstances readily. Education is the thing we want above all others.

Suppose we have every child staying at school until the age of 14, and secured from overwork during these hours. What do we want next? We want, as this resolution says, some system of instruction, and some system of superintendence by the education authorities over the life of all these boys and girls, who are termed in the Factory Acts "young persons." I do not know anything more painful in the poor parts of London than to see the contrast between the material that the school turns out and the use made of that material by the industrial life of the district. You go to a prize-giving, and you see little boys and girls surrounded by everything that is clean and wholesome and pleasant; London schools are places like another world when you contrast them with the industrial world around. Later on you see the same children with the habits of the factory and the streets, and the marks of overwork upon them. We want to have these children under instruction and under the supervision of the education authority from 14 to 18, these four most critical years of the life of every boy and girl. Supposing we had this one simple reform; supposing we had every child not merely instructed, but brought under the observation of the school, with power to call in the whole machinery of school doctor, school nurse, and so forth, and with power in the last resource to call upon the education authority to give its veto on the particular employment in which the child is engaged. We might have something like a revolution in industrial conditions if we were to have that one thing, that the physical care of the child should be under the supervision of the education authority. If we could have the persistent power of the teacher directed to the child up till 18, the teacher whose one object is the welfare of the child, if we could bring the power of the school and the power of the headmaster to bear on the employment of young persons, we should then have a revolution in our factory system and system of employment. I have been instructed by the Chairman that speeches are to be limited—obedience is the rule in education—and I will therefore conclude these remarks. I have not said much. If I had explained in detail all our shortcomings, all the anomalies of the present system, I should have gone on for an hour and not exhausted the subject, but I have said enough to put this resolution before the meeting, and I have very great pleasure in doing so. (Applause.)

MISS NORAH SMYTH (Workers' Suffrage Federation).

I have pleasure in moving the following amendment in the absence of Miss Pankhurst: In (c) after the words "technical instruction," insert the words "during the hours for which they are paid by their employers."

MISS SYLVIA PANKHURST (who had just arrived).

I am very glad to second the amendment. We sent this as a suggestion to Miss Newcomb, and she asked us to move it in the form of an amendment. We consider that the working hours of young people are far too long to allow them to develop as they should, either mentally or physically, and with a view to their efficiency in later life. It is a common experience in our neighbourhood\* to find that girls of 17 are told they are too old and not wanted. When a woman has reached about 30 years it is exceedingly difficult for her to obtain employment. A soldier's wife whom I know, aged 32, was not able to manage on her separation allowance. She spent several days going from factory to factory to obtain employment, but everywhere she presented herself it was said that she was too old.

This tendency is growing, not only in our country, but all over the world. In Norway the woman factory inspector told me that employers wanted young girls, not older women, and that the young girls were crushing their mothers out of employment. She said that girls are employed for a few years, and as soon as they begin to ask for higher wages they are discharged. The Americans are experts in the matter of output, and I was told in America that after a number of years of mechanical work at high pressure during girlhood, later in life the capacity for speed is reduced. Therefore, apart from the fact that young people are paid lower wages than their elders, they are often in some respects more profitable to their employers, because their speed in many cases is greater. A short time ago a number of girls who had been employed at a clothing factory almost next door to where I live came to us in great distress. Their ages were mostly from 17 to 20, and they were dismissed because it was said the factory had no work for them, and yet it was posted on the walls outside the factory that young girls of 14 and 15 were wanted within. The employers were taking on more young girls at the time that they were dismissing the older girls. I found that the girls who had been dismissed were earning on an average more than the older women, although employed at the same piece-rates. That bears out the view that on mechanical work girls and lads in their teens can often earn more than older people.

We all agree that it is better for adults to be bearing the main part of the burden of industry, therefore something must be done to prevent its being more profitable to employ children than older people.

Apart from that, the children should continue their education; it should not stop when they leave the elementary school, and although the evening class is well in its way, that helps to extend the working hours, and to take from the time for rest and recreation. Recently I was at Messrs. Cadbury's works at Bournville, where my attention was called to the good physique of the girls. It is compulsory for all the girls under 18 employed at Cadbury's to attend educational classes, the swimming bath and gymnasium, during the working hours, which number only 42 per week. But it is only the fairly well-to-do working-class people who can afford to send their girls to Cadbury's, owing to the fact that the hours during which the girls are attending the classes are hours during the working day that are not paid for, and so the weekly wage is seriously reduced.

We consider that so long as the present system continues the employer ought to bear part of the burden of educating the young people, and therefore the instruction should be compulsory, and ought to be given during the day time, and during the hours for which the employer pays.

The amendment was accepted by the proposer. Miss Sylvia Pankhurst then seconded the resolution.

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\* Bow, London, E.

A second amendment was proposed that in (c) of the resolution "or other" should be inserted. It would then read: "Attendance of young persons to the age of 18 years at classes for technical or other instruction should be compulsory."

Question: May I ask whether Miss Pankhurst is aware that in Switzerland all children up to 18 are compelled to go once a week to school from 8 to 6, no matter what their employment? They are given food during that time, and a certain amount of leisure during the day.

I would like to know for whom the technical instruction is to be compulsory, for all the children in the land, or for whom?

Mrs. Bracher: The resolution demands that every child is to have the opportunity of proper technical instruction.

Amendment, accepted by both proposer and seconder, was incorporated in the resolution.

### MRS. HERRING.

We have not yet got equal opportunities for women in regard to education. We in N.S.W. are still debarred from the legal profession, and are not admitted to agricultural colleges. With regard to education, you may be interested to hear a part of the platform of the Liberal Association of New South Wales:—"In education better provision for the training of teachers, extension of the opportunities of education for women, and provision for instruction in all branches of domestic economy; further development of the system of continuation schools for boys and girls who have left school and are out at work, also trade schools where education and the elements of industrial trade would be taught, more effective enforcement of attendance of children at school, improvement in status and salaries of lower-grade teachers, further facilities for the education of the feeble-minded, abolition of the present system of retaining of fees for positions in the Public Service on examination, education in all its branches to be national and free, maintaining the State educational system as wholly unsectarian, and compulsory instruction of the elder girls in all schools in infant hygiene, domestic economy, and dressmaking.

When I left Sydney a motion had been brought up in the last Conference of the State Liberal Party for the establishment of a Chair of Domestic Science, and a properly equipped Domestic Science College in all large centres. This was passed, but I am afraid the war has retarded any further progress in the matter.

### MISS HODGE.

Mrs. Herring has told us that women are not on an equality with men with regard to education, and as regards the entrance into the professions, but she was speaking only of New South Wales. It is different in Victoria and South Australia, where we have women lawyers and justices of the peace, a woman judge and women advocates. There was a celebrated incident of one man who was rather impertinent to a woman advocate, and the judge called him to account, and he said he had no idea she was a barrister, because she wore a skirt. The judge told him he had something to learn.

Well, in all these new countries the child should be the chief asset of the State. They realise the immense value of the population in these two countries of Australia and New Zealand, because women put life before property in every case, and the child is the chief asset of the State. These are new countries, and that is why the milk is kept pure, housing conditions are good, children are not allowed to go hungry—scarcely one school in Australia has a hungry child in its classes. It is the good feeding of the children and the healthy physical training they receive in the playgrounds and parks that has

contributed to the high standard of health shown in the recent return for the military training. Out of 100,000 boys who presented themselves for the beginning of military training at 14, only 4 per cent. were rejected. (In a district of London, out of 300 who wished to enlist, 150 were rejected in the early days of the war; they are not so particular now.) You must always remember that a high rate of infant mortality means a low standard of health. Boys and girls receive, except in New South Wales, equal opportunity for instruction; they have six hours a day when they enter the labour market at 16 years of age in New Zealand, 15 in Victoria, and 14 in other States. With the minimum wage and the maximum hours of work, the employer has found it unprofitable to employ children, and you can hardly find children employed in any trade. In Canada the law does not allow a child to be a wage-earner till over the age of 14. But I have been in the children's courts there and have seen under-sized little creatures come in and say they were 14 or 14½. I heard one child, evidently about 8 or 9—changing its teeth, in fact—swear in court that it was 14. Its parents had sent it to work in a factory. Immigrants come into Canada in great numbers, and send their children to factory work, which affects them physically and morally. In Canada, also, the children may do any work out of doors at any age as wage-earners. In Australia the law protects the children. Street trading is absolutely forbidden in the towns for any boy or girl under 18. The age of consent has been steadily raised in Australia, and now it is 18, and they are planning to raise it to 21. The minimum wage for women, who are the potential mothers of the race, is 25s. in New Zealand, and 16s. in Australia, and this 16s. is only for women under 20. We went over several factories, and we found that very few women were earning only the minimum wage. This means that mothers can be kept in perfectly healthy conditions, and, when bearing children, are provided by the State with a bonus of £5, which is paid direct to the mother. So the baby is able to come into the world under healthy conditions. (Applause.)

#### MRS. BRACHER.

I should like to supplement Miss Hodge's information about New Zealand. She did not say anything about the dairy industry in which young children are employed by their parents, sometimes for very long hours. Children have to get up very early in the morning; a girl of 10 years will milk several cows before she goes to school. She leaves school at 4 o'clock, comes home, and has to milk another lot of cows. The school teachers complain that the children are so tired that during school hours they are not able to work well. This is an important question, because one hears that it is affecting the health of the children. This evil is owing to the high price of labour in the country districts.

#### MISS HODGE.

The cases which Mrs. Bracher has mentioned are not cases that the State can easily control. It is very difficult for the State to regulate how parents should deal with their children. The remedy is to teach the mothers and fathers of the race how disastrous it is to overwork children. There is a great difference between parents employing their children to help them on their own farms and capitalists employing children for wages. We must bear in mind that it is exceedingly difficult, too, for the State to regulate the employment of children by their parents without interfering with family life.

Question: Is it only parents in these dairy farms who employ children? We have been asked the question at our meetings in the London parks: "Why do women in Australia allow children to be overworked on farms?"

## MISS HODGE.

The laws are so stringent in Australia and New Zealand that it would be impossible for a farmer to employ children as wage-earners.

## MISS NEWCOMB.

May I put in a plea for imagination on the part of the audience who have never been Overseas? Have you any idea of what it means to be isolated? Have you any idea what it means not to see another human being for six months? Perhaps a man and his wife and a couple of children are all that are in the place in question. When Miss Hodge and I were in Australia on a train which had 46 miles to go before the next stop, a family of little children got in. It was about six in the evening. We got into conversation and found that their father brought them seven miles to the station in the morning to catch the seven o'clock train (they had free passes to the nearest town, where there was a school); they spent the day in the school in that town, and then they returned by the one and only other train at six in the evening, when their father met them and drove them the seven miles to their home.

## MRS. HERRING.

I know that legislation is being thought out in Australia to meet the very difficult case of child labour with parents in the remote bush districts.

## MRS. BEAMISH LANE.

I only want to say a few words on this resolution with regard to the position of women and children in South Africa. With regard to (a) I am glad to be able to tell you that in the Transvaal no white child is employed as a wage-earner. In the second place, we come up against a very serious problem in South Africa, the problem of native labour. As you know, we have a overwhelming number of natives around us—not only pure Kaffirs, but half-breeds, the coloured man, and a great many trades are worked at by the coloured man—and the native does a great deal of domestic work. The labour problem in South Africa is very acute, and there is a terrible jealousy on the part of the white man lest the native should take away his work. If you limit the work of young persons of either sex to six hours a day—I think you can get a native to work any number of hours—I think you would come up against a very difficult question. You might be putting the young white person out of work in favour of the native. It involves a very large question; so much so, that as the delegate from South Africa I shall have to abstain from voting on this question because I do not quite realise how far-reaching it would be.

I should also like to tell you we have made a little progress in South Africa in the way of domestic science. An excellent school has been started, and is doing very well indeed. They have an excellent curriculum, and a good number of students. We are, of course, anxious that there should be opportunities for technical and professional training for the youth of both sexes.

With regard to the women of Natal, they are not quite so lucky over their technical instruction as the women of the Transvaal. When the Union was formed, Maritzburg, which used to be the seat of Government, was given a large sum of money to help them on their way, because they were going to lose so much from the seat of Government being removed. Some of this money was kept over to build a technical institute. This technical institute, we discovered, was to be for boys only. The women of Maritzburg formed a deputation to the Mayor, and requested that surely girls might be included. He was very indignant, and said it was not for girls at all; it was entirely for boys.

The age of consent has this year been raised to 16 years throughout the Union through very hard work on the part of suffrage and other societies. In the Transvaal and Natal the age of consent has been 16 for some time. Last year we tried to get it raised in the Orange Free State, where it was only 14. A Bill was brought in, but not allowed to pass through want of time. This year this Bill has been passed. (Applause.)

#### MISS BRITTEN.

As one of the representatives from South Africa, may I say that though I am in thorough sympathy with this motion, I am in the same position as the delegate who has just spoken. As Mrs. Beamish Lane has told you, the whole question is complicated by the question of native labour. We are by no means agreed upon it; it is a burning question; the four Provinces have absolutely different ideas on it. For this reason, although I am in sympathy with the resolution theoretically, I should have to abstain from voting. Might I say if it could be possible for the motion to be so amended as to apply to Great Britain, Australia, New Zealand and Canada, then perhaps I could support it, although it would seem rather presumptuous on my part to be voting for a resolution for another country in that way. (Applause.)

#### MISS LAWRENCE.

I do not think that there is very much to add to the very full and illuminating discussion we have had. We have seen how much we have to learn from the Colonies. When one hears of all that the women of Australia and New Zealand have done, one feels that this country has a very great deal to copy from her daughters. They have not merely child legislation, they have a general system of labour legislation of which the child legislation is only a part, a minimum wage for mothers, which we have so long tried to secure here; they have those things which we have been trying for and which we have so imperfectly attained.

I think the discussion has shown how much we need to safeguard the wage-earning child and the child home-worker. In educational reform we must safeguard not merely the child who goes into the market for wages, but the child whose slavery is discussed under the sentimental plea of helping in the home.

#### MISS BRITTEN.

I must ask your kind indulgence for a moment. I am afraid just now I spoke too hurriedly, and may have given you a wrong impression. It is not that the white are to be pitted against the black, but that in South Africa we have only just obtained compulsory education up to the age of 14 for the white children. Many of us are longing to have it for the black, too, but we have not yet been able to apply that compulsion in the case of the white. How can we apply it in those vast country districts? It is a practical question. I am most earnestly in sympathy with the movement. Is it too late to amend the resolution so as to show that we are not out of sympathy with it? We want to work for it, but we are not ready yet in our own country for such a sweeping change. I do not know if I have made myself clear, but that is the point. It is no use making education compulsory to the age of 18 when it is not applied entirely over the country to the age of 14. We have a few but not enough schools for natives. (Applause.)

Resolution, as amended by Miss Norah Smyth and Miss Pankhurst:—

“ That in the opinion of this Conference

(a) No child under the age of 14 should be employed as a wage-earner.



(b) The working hours of young persons of either sex should be limited to 6 hours per day.

(c) Attendance of young persons to the age of 18 years at classes for technical or other instruction during the hours for which they are paid by their employers should be compulsory.

(d) Opportunities for technical and professional training should be absolutely equal for the youth of both sexes.

Carried unanimously.

South African delegates abstained from voting.

At this point Miss Newcomb took the chair to enable Mrs. Bracher to move the next resolution.

### MRS. BRACHER (NEW ZEALAND).

The next resolution is:—

“That this Conference considers that a widow with children under the wage-earning age should receive a pension for herself and for each of such children.”

In moving this resolution I cannot do better than give you a short account of the Widows' Pensions Act in New Zealand. This Act was passed in 1911, and is therefore a quite recent one, and has been amended several times. The applicants for widows' pensions must be British subjects of good character. They apply to a magistrate, the magistrate investigates the claim, and the magistrate alone has the power to grant a pension. The term “widow” includes a woman whose husband is detained in a mental hospital; the term “child” includes a stepchild, or child legally adopted during the lifetime of the husband of the applicant. Now, the maximum pensions payable are £12 a year for one child under fourteen, £6 added for each additional child under fourteen. For children born before the arrival of their parents in New Zealand, ten years' residence is required. A child born out of New Zealand during the temporary absence of its mother is not debarred from the pension; if the widow has an annual income of her own, including personal earnings which do not exceed £100 a year, she is also eligible. So that a widow may have £100 of her own, and yet obtain pensions for each of her children. The Act does not apply to aliens, Chinese or other Asiatics, and the pensions can be continued after the death of the widow to the guardian of the children. Also the native women, the Maoris, are included in the widows' pensions, and, of course, the Maori women are included in the Old Age Pensions, too. I think that this magnificent Act should show you the good results of the women's vote in New Zealand, that they have been able to obtain these very good terms. Mr. Balfour said the other day, in addressing the Parliamentary members from Overseas at a banquet of the House of Commons: “The spirit of law in the British Empire is the same throughout.” Well, I can honestly say I very heartily wish that the spirit of New Zealand law would quickly invade our Parliament at Westminster. (Applause.)

Another word about widows. An important point is in the land legislation of New Zealand—this also affects widows with children. When some of the State land is being cut up and divided into farms, either large or small, these farms are balloted for, and a widow with children can take part in a ballot, also a wife of a farmer, or a farmer's daughter or sister, and in the land ballots for State land preference is given to those who have no land at all. So that if a widow in the town with several children took them into the country she would be given preference over the big farmer who had plenty of land and wanted to get more; moreover, she would not only get the farm on which to bring up her children, but the Government would lend her capital if she had not enough to develop the farm

until it brought in some return, also capital with which to build a house. A widow without children could ballot for land, but the widow with children would have the preference. I have much pleasure in moving the resolution in favour of widows' pensions. (Applause.)

Mrs. Bracher then resumed the chair.

#### MRS. WALKER (WORKERS' SUFFRAGE FEDERATION).

I have great pleasure in seconding this resolution, but I should like to add to it that the pensions of men in the Government service should, on their death, be transferred to their widows. The wife, by her economy and care of the home, makes the husband's outside work possible, and she deserves to receive the pension as much as he.

Mrs. Despard agreed very heartily with the last speaker.

#### MISS NEWCOMB.

Two of the many difficulties in arranging for this Conference were the great number of subjects proposed and the short time available for discussion. The point of bringing forward this particular resolution was that if the law were amended to limit the working hours of young people a widow with children under the wage-earning age would be deprived of a source of income. For that reason, in drawing up the programme, the question of pensions was admitted. The resolution arises out of the previous one. There can be no one present who does not sympathise with everything that has been said with regard to pensions for widows generally, but I beg that the general question may not be raised merely because there is no time to discuss it.

#### MISS EVELYN SHARP.

I should like to ask if, when pensions are given to widows in New Zealand, they are placed under police supervision, as the wives of soldiers with separation allowances are placed in this country.

Mrs. Bracher: No.

#### MISS PANKHURST.

Is the pension refused if the husband and wife have not been living in the same home together, as in the case of naval and military pensions here?

#### MRS. BRACHER.

It depends on the magistrate's decision.

#### MISS EVELYN SHARP.

Does it not really depend on whether the women have political power or not?

Resolution put to the meeting and carried unanimously.

#### MRS. DESPARD.

I have been asked by the Committee to say a few words in closing this Conference. I consider my task a very important, indeed, a solemn one. To some it may seem that this Conference has not had any great significance, but when we consider those who have come together, women who represent many far away from us in residence, who differ from us in experience, and who are going to enter far more into the thought and into the policy of the Empire than they have done in the past, then I think it must be realised that this has been a very important Conference indeed.

I believe there is one thing which has struck all of you, which you have felt as I have felt. That is the extreme complexity of the problems facing us, and the extreme difficulty of their solution. We have been speaking of the health of the race, injured so cruelly by the perpetual and deliberate breaking of Nature's laws. We have

been considering the vigour and strength of the community, which will only be kept at a high level by great alterations in the laws which regulate the hours and conditions of labour, and education of our children. In face of our responsibility as the generation that is now in possession of the earth, some of us may have felt inclined to despair. Now, it has come to me that the very first step on the way to victory in the fight against these evils is to have the courage and resolution to be absolutely honest. I am speaking about mental honesty, spiritual honesty. We must not profess that which we do not believe. We must not profess that which we do not attempt to practise. (Applause.)

There is one thing in which all the great religions of the world have been united, and that is the belief in the brotherhood of mankind, a brotherhood without distinction of sex, class, creed or colour. If we put that belief behind our work we shall presently find all our difficulties cleared away. It may seem strange to talk about brotherhood in this way, because it is, first of all, international. But what is happening at the present moment is only a foretaste of what is going to be. We, sister delegates from the United Kingdom and Overseas, are here to say that brotherhood is possible; not only that it is possible, but that it must be, it shall be, and that we will bring it to pass. I am sure that we women feel this in our womanhood instinctively. I should like myself to discard such words as "foreigner," often used slightly, and "alien," that horrible word we have heard so much since the war. No human being can be alien to us; that is absolutely impossible. (Applause.) The time will come when there will be but one Fatherland for all true men and women in the world, but to attain to this we must cultivate the spirit of justice, not only within the nations, but between them. We want, "diplomacy"—subtle word—to be swept away, and the great democracy to be informed upon and to judge of everything that goes on. We want mutual respect, and this will only come if we realise our common humanity, our common brotherhood. With this mutual respect will come toleration. It is intolerance that causes strife, because we cannot put ourselves in our brother's point of view. We have had wrong ideals, bad ideals, the ideals of the world. These ideals must be dethroned altogether. You remember how the Master Christ said, when they wanted to make Him a king, "The Son of Man came not to be ministered unto but to minister." We need the ideal of service, not the ideal of superiority, the ideal of unity, not the ideal of strife.

Before we part, let me say how heartily I hope that when the day of which we have been dreaming dawns, when the world has returned to something like a sane mind, when we are thinking of reconstruction, we may meet again here, in the United Kingdom, or there, in the Overseas Dominions, and be able to tell of the triumphs that have been gained by our earnest efforts to serve our brothers and sisters in their adversity. By labour incessant and devout to raise earth to Heaven; to realise, in fact, the good that exists as yet only in idea—this is the true object of life, and we can only reach it when we achieve and maintain our unity, each with every other and all with the Divine.

## Evening Meetings.

### WEDNESDAY, "AT HOME."

An "At Home" was given on Wednesday evening, July 5th, to delegates and friends of the Union. The hostesses were the Executive Committee, Mrs. Charles MacLaurin (N.S.W.), Mrs. Keith Adam (W. Australia), Mrs. Auerbach and Mrs. Morris (S. Africa). A most attractive programme of vocal and instrumental music, and a clever little play, written by Mrs. Leo Myers, was arranged by Mrs. W. J. Turner (Victoria, Australia). The refreshments were under the kind care of Miss Cole, of the Women's Freedom League Settlement. Mrs. Despard, (President, Women's Freedom League), Miss Norah Smyth (Workers' Suffrage Federation), Miss Silvester (Women's Emergency Corps), and Mrs. Agar Adamson (Belgian Canal Boat Fund), spoke with warm appreciation and gratitude of the help given to their work for sufferers through the war by the generous gifts of clothes and money sent by friends Overseas through the War Relief Committee of the B.D.W.S.U. Miss Newcomb, replying, gave the warm thanks of her Committee to Sir Thos. Mackenzie, High Commissioner, and Mr. Cameron, Produce Commissioner for New Zealand, and to Sir John McCall, Agent-General for Tasmania, for unfailing help in getting the goods from the London docks; to many friends who had aided in the work of distribution; and to the Women's Emergency Corps for their kindness in giving free house-room since October, 1914, to all cases and bales received from Overseas.

### THURSDAY, INDIA.

A remarkably interesting Indian meeting took place on the evening of Thursday, July 6th. The chair was taken by Lady Muir-Mackenzie (Indian Women's Education Association), and the chief object of the meeting was to learn about the woman's movement in India. All the speakers were Indians, and spoke from first-hand knowledge and experience.

Sir Krishna Gupta, K.C.S.I. (President of the Indian Women's Education Association), spoke of the great Hindu women of the past, of Sita and of Savitri, whose wonderful spirituality, love and persistence had forced the god of death to give back their husbands, and he added, with quiet irony: "I know of no instance in which a husband compelled this god to give him back his wife." He declared that when the men in India obtain the vote for themselves they will insist on the women sharing the privilege. With the progress of education he felt sure his countrywomen would press forward the claims of nationalism with irresistible force. He concluded by saying that a freer intercourse and a better understanding between the different parts of the British Empire was all that was needed to make this the greatest Empire ever known, and he welcomed this meeting as a tangible proof of the interest felt in India by Great Britain's self-governing Oversea Dominions.

Sir Mancherjee Bhownagree, K.C.I.E., declared that his interest in Woman's Suffrage was keen and of long standing. The education of women had, he said, for many years received attention in Bombay, where women were admitted to the highest University examinations. Government was beginning to give the lead in matters educational, but encouragement was not always forthcoming when women were ready to take their part in public movements. If the

women of India were treated in a fair and English way, it would be found that the efforts for the ultimate solidarity of the British Empire would not have been in vain.

Mr. Yusuf Ali said that the women of India were more in need of co-operation than sympathy. He emphasised the fact that the women of India had great ideals, and that the Woman's Movement was progressing there. He spoke of a paper edited from the *Purdah*, of a University entirely staffed by women, and of a woman ruler, who read and wrote great books, and who held in her hands all the strings of executive government.

Mr. Syud Hossain, alluding to the fact that the speakers, including himself, had been cited as representing three great divisions of religious thought in India—Brahman, Parsee and Mohammedan—said that they were all united by a more powerful bond, that of a common nationality, and that each and all of them wished to be regarded as representing India, and not any special form of belief. He laid stress on the urgent necessity for the British democracy and the Indian people to be able to exchange ideas freely. All the educated women of India were staunch nationalists, but as the British Government of India controlled the revenues of that country it must be responsible for the future extension of education. He was confident that in the near future the women of India would stand upon the same suffrage platform with the women of England.

Cordial votes of thanks were proposed to all the speakers by Miss Margaret Hodge, and to Lady Muir-Mackenzie by Sir Krishna Gupta, K.C.S.I., and were carried unanimously and with acclamation.

A message of thanks was sent to Mrs. Haigh, Hon. Sec. of the Indian Women's Education Association, who had greatly assisted the Committee of the B.D.W.S.U. in arranging the meeting, but who was unable, through illness, to be present at it.

#### FRIDAY, PUBLIC SUFFRAGE MEETING.

On Friday evening, July 7th, a joint suffrage meeting was held, in which the British Dominions Women's Suffrage Union was supported by the following Societies:—

United Suffragists, Women's Freedom League, Workers' Suffrage Federation, Forward Cymric Suffrage Union, Suffragettes of the W.S.P.U., Independent W.S.P.U., Women's Tax Resistance League, Church League for Women's Suffrage, Free Church League for Women's Suffrage, Friends' Suffrage League, Catholic Women's Suffrage Society, Actresses' Franchise League, Civil Service Women's Suffrage Society, Sanitary Inspectors' Suffrage Society, and two Irish Societies.

For the first time in the history of the Woman Suffrage Movement the claim for the recognition of women's political rights was brought forward on the ground that such recognition was essential to the welfare of the Empire. An Imperial Poster Parade was organised for the previous day by the Workers' Suffrage Federation, the Suffragettes of the W.S.P.U., and the International Suffrage Shop, the entire scheme of colour being red, white and blue. The handbills, also in red, white and blue, with the Union Jack, bore the words of Mr. Asquith:

"It will never be possible, in my judgment, to revert to our old methods of counsel and of government. The fabric of the Empire will have to be re-fashioned."

For the first time in London a Woman Suffrage procession marched headed by the Union Jack.

The chair at the meeting was occupied by Mr. H. W. Nevinson, who delivered an able and eloquent address on the present suffrage situation. The following communication was read from the Northern

Men's Federation for Women's Suffrage, sent from a meeting in Edinburgh, held July 2nd:—

"That this meeting of Northern Men Electors wishes to place on record its entire sympathy with the aims of the British Dominions Woman Suffrage Union, on questions relating to the freedom, equality, morality, family life, and upliftment of the sexes, and begs to record its conviction that no satisfactory basis of life for the future of civilisation can be obtained until women all over the world are politically emancipated." Signed by M. Arncliffe-Sennett, President, and the following Magistrates and Town Councillors (Scotland and Northern England): James Brunton, John Patrick, F. W. Shaw, Chas. W. Smith, Simon Kay, Henry Drummond, Alexander Orr, D. Wilson McLaren.

Mrs. Pethick Lawrence then proposed the following resolution:—

"That this meeting of the British Dominions Woman Suffrage Union, supported by fifteen British Suffrage Societies, respectfully urges on the consideration of the Imperial Government the pressing need of the co-operation of women with men in the work of 're-fashioning the fabric of the Empire,' and urges that the vote be granted to the women of the United Kingdom without delay."

The resolution was supported by Mrs. Despard, Miss Sylvia Pankhurst, and Mr. George Lansbury, and carried with one dissentient.

A beautiful bouquet of carnations was presented to the Hon. Sec. B.D.W.S.U. by Miss Evelyn Sharp, who expressed, on behalf of the Committee, warm recognition of the work done by her in convening the Conference.

At the close of the meeting a copy of the resolution, with a list of the co-operating Suffrage Societies, was taken to the official residence of the Prime Minister.

The meetings of the Conference were held in the great hall of the Central Buildings, Westminster. A smaller hall in the same block more suited for conference purposes had been secured by the committee, but was taken from them for Government work too late to arrange for another hall of the same size. The audience at the daily meetings ranged from about 80 (on a very wet morning) to 200 persons. At the Indian meeting there were from 600 to 700, and at the Public Suffrage meeting 900 to 1,000.

Thanks are due to Miss Alma Hodge for the large scroll giving the name of the Union, and to Messrs. Whiteley for the loan of flags of the four Dominions. The banners of the co-operating Suffrage Societies were skilfully arranged round the hall by members of the Women's Tax Resistance League.

An Exhibition and Sale of Literature was held in the ante-hall. The following held stalls:—

Women's Freedom League, Workers' Suffrage Federation, United Suffragists, National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies, Suffragettes of the W.S.P.U., Women's Tax Resistance League, Church League for Woman Suffrage, Free Church League for Women's Suffrage, Catholic Women's Suffrage Society, Association for Moral and Social Hygiene, Fabian Society, League of Peace and Freedom, Women's International League, International Suffrage Shop.

# PAPERS AND LITERATURE RECEIVED FROM OVERSEAS.

Canada.—Paper from Mrs. Gertrude Richardson, Political Educational League of Manitoba; literature from the National Equal Franchise Union.

South Africa.—Papers from Mrs. Solly, President, National Council of Women, Cape Town, and Hon. Treas. W.E.L. of C.P.; from Mrs. Krause, Town Councillor, Johannesburg; from Mrs. Pomfret, Secretary, Women's Reform Club, Johannesburg, and Report of War Relief Work; from Mrs. Ashburnham, President, W.E.L., Bloemfontein, O.F.S., and one from Natal, unsigned. Literature published by the W.E.L. of Cape Province, and by the W.E.A.U. of S. Africa.

New Zealand.—Paper from Mrs. Gibson, Women's Political League, Auckland.

Australia.—Literature and Reports from the Women's Liberal League of N.S.W.; the Women's Service Guild of W. Australia and the W.N.P.P.A. of S. Australia.

The following were received too late for use at the Conference:—

New Zealand.—Paper from Mrs. Baird, President, W.C.T.U., Invercargill.

South Africa.—Papers from Mrs. de Villiers, W.E.L. of C.P. (Loss of Nationality); from Miss Janisch and Miss Rostowsky, W.E.L. of C.P. (Women in Industry).

Australia.—Paper and Photographs of Women Leaders, from Miss Annie Golding, President W.P.A. of N.S.W.  
Report of work and booklets published by the Australasian White Cross League.

The Executive Committee, B.D.W.S.U., gratefully acknowledges receipt of all these communications, and desires to add that every one of them will be of service at Suffrage meetings in London in the coming season.

Literature from the Dominions Overseas was exhibited on a stall in the Hall, under the charge of Miss Brenda Fairbridge and Mrs. Morice (S. Africa). It included copies for the last two years of the "White Ribbon" (N.Z.), the "Woman Voter" (Melbourne, Australia), the "Woman's Outlook" (S. Africa), and the "Woman's Century" (Canada), all contributed by Miss Newcomb.

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Congratulations and good wishes for the success of the Conference were received from the following:—

New Zealand.—The Women's Christian Temperance Union of New Zealand.

The Canterbury Women's Institute.  
Women's Political League of Auckland.  
Lady Stout.

Australia.—The Women's Political Association of Victoria (cabled by the President, Miss Vida Goldstein).

The Women's Non-Party Political Association of S. Australia.  
The Women's Political Education League of S. Australia.  
The Women's Service Guild of W. Australia.  
The Women's Progressive Association of New South Wales.  
Bishop Frodsham (North Queensland).  
Bishop Mercer (Tasmania).

South Africa.—The Women's Enfranchisement League of Cape Province.

The Women's Enfranchisement Association of the Union of S. Africa.

The Hon. W. P. Schreiner, High Commissioner for S. Africa, and Mrs. Schreiner.

**Canada.**—The National Equal Franchise Union.

Mrs. Gertrude Richardson, Political Education League of Manitoba.

Also from almost all the Suffrage Societies of the United Kingdom and many private friends.

#### OUTSIDE EVENTS.

to which Delegates and Representatives from Overseas were cordially invited:—

Tuesday, June 27th.—“At Home” at the offices of the National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies, given by Mrs. Fawcett and the Executive Committee of the N.U., to meet Mrs. Harley, of the Scottish Women's Hospital, Salonika.

Thursday, June 29th.—“At Home” at the residence of Mrs. Hertha Ayrton, Sussex Square, W., to meet the Committee of the United Suffragists.

Friday, June 30th.—Visit to Miss Margaret Macmillan's Baby Camp, Deptford.

Monday, July 3rd.—“At Home” at 400, Old Ford Road, E., given by Miss Sylvia Pankhurst and the Workers' Suffrage Federation. Visit to the Babies' House (“Mothers' Arms”), etc.

Tuesday, July 4th.—Visits to the Women's Freedom League Settlement, Nine Elms, S.W.; to the “Despard Arms,” Hampstead Road; and to the United Suffragists' Women's War Club, Southwark.

Thursday, July 6th, 7 p.m.—Mrs. Despard's Birthday Party, given by the Women's Freedom League.

Saturday, July 8th, 3 p.m.—Procession, Trafalgar Square to Hyde Park, and Intercessory Service, “to witness for God in time of war.” (Church League for Women's Suffrage.)

Reports of the proceedings of the Conference appeared in all the chief London daily papers, in many Scottish and Welsh papers, in the chief English provincial papers, in the “British Australasian,” the “Christian Commonwealth,” and other weeklies, and in all the Suffrage papers.



## BRITISH DOMINIONS WOMAN SUFFRAGE UNION.

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### Form for Affiliation of a Society.

*The (full title) .....  
.....desires affiliation with the British  
Dominions Woman Suffrage Union, and encloses herewith  
the affiliation fee of.....(see Report p. 7).*

*Signed ..... President.*

*.....Secretary.*

*Full Address .....  
.....*

*Date.....*

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### Form for Hon. Associate Members.

*Please enrol me as an Hon. Associate Member of the  
British Dominions Woman Suffrage Union. I enclose  
.....membership fee (See Report p. 7).*

*Signed.....*

*Full address .....  
.....*

*Date.....*

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